

SCALING REUSE ACROSS THE BALTIC SEA REGION

REUSABLE FOOD PACKAGING IN PRACTICE
LESSONS FROM 56 REPLICATIONS CASES

Change(K)now! Replication Report



2026

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Executive Summary

The transition from single-use to reusable food and beverage packaging requires more than successful pilot projects. Reuse systems must be adapted to local conditions, integrated into everyday operations and made convenient for businesses, institutions and consumers.

Building on 25 original pilot initiatives, Change(K)now! has supported the transfer and adaptation of reusable packaging solutions in food delivery systems across the Baltic Sea Region. This report analyses 56 documented replication cases across eight countries, covering strategic initiatives, institutions, events and takeaway services.

Of the 56 cases, 41 have reached practical implementation, while 11 are in planning and four are being explored. The analysis uses three complementary scaling dimensions: Scaling Out (all 56 cases) concerns transferring and adapting solutions to new settings; Scaling Up (20 cases) involves efforts to influence policies, procurement and institutional arrangements; and Scaling Deep (41 cases) concerns changes in everyday practices, organisational routines and user behaviour. These dimensions overlap and describe activities or ambitions rather than proven long-term impact.

Five key lessons emerge:

1. **Local adaptation is essential.** Reuse systems must fit existing infrastructure, business operations, financing and user needs.
2. **Convenience drives participation.** Simple return arrangements, accessible payment systems and manageable workloads are critical for users and operators.
3. **Operational viability enables continuity.** Collection, washing, logistics and financing must remain practical beyond initial implementation.
4. **Institutional support can enable wider adoption.** Municipal coordination, procurement and shared infrastructure can reduce barriers when responsibilities are clear.
5. **Adoption requires engagement and learning.** Introducing reusable packaging does not guarantee repeated use. Staff involvement, customer participation and lessons from limited uptake help improve future approaches.

The central finding is that successful replication requires more than transferring a reusable packaging solution to a new setting. Lasting use depends on local adaptation, viable operations, institutional support and sustained participation.

While the cases provide stronger evidence of implementation experiences and practical barriers than of long-term environmental or behavioural impact, they offer valuable lessons for expanding reusable food and beverage packaging across the Baltic Sea Region.

About this report

Single-use food and beverage packaging presents a significant challenge for waste prevention and the transition towards a circular economy in the Baltic Sea Region. The Interreg Baltic Sea Region project Change(K)now! addresses this challenge by testing and promoting reusable packaging solutions and supporting their adoption in different local and organisational contexts.

The project has implemented 25 original pilot initiatives, generating practical experience with reusable systems in a range of settings. However, its ambition extends beyond these pilots. An important objective has been to enable other organisations and communities to build on the solutions, experiences and lessons developed through Change(K)now!.

Through peer reviews, training, webinars, collaborative activities and cross-border knowledge exchange, project partners have supported the transfer and adaptation of reusable packaging solutions.

This report examines 56 documented replication cases across eight countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The cases cover strategic initiatives, institutional settings, events and takeaway services, representing different stages of development from exploration and planning to practical implementation.

The analysis explores how reusable food and beverage packaging solutions have been transferred and adapted, which practical, organisational and institutional conditions have enabled or hindered implementation, and what lessons can inform future replication. The concepts of Scaling Out, Scaling Up and Scaling Deep provide an analytical framework for understanding these experiences.

Rather than treating replication or implementation as evidence of success in itself, the report distinguishes between introducing a solution, achieving practical adoption and establishing lasting change. Its purpose is to identify how reusable packaging systems can be made to work in different settings and how these experiences can support their wider and more sustained adoption.

From replication to scaling: transferring and adapting circular solutions

Moving from single-use to reusable food and beverage packaging requires more than introducing new cups, bowls and containers. Reuse systems depend on collection and washing infrastructure, viable business models, organisational routines, institutional support and the willingness of customers and staff to participate.

For Change(K)now!, a central question is how solutions and experiences developed through earlier pilots can be transferred, adapted and implemented in new settings. Research on scaling provides a useful framework for understanding this process and the conditions that can support wider adoption (Riddell & Moore, 2015).

Replication refers to transferring an existing solution or approach to a new context. For reusable packaging, this may involve introducing a reuse system at another event, business, institution or municipality. Replication rarely means creating an identical copy: return arrangements, washing

facilities, payment systems and organisational responsibilities often need to be adapted to local conditions.

Scaling is the broader process through which solutions expand to new settings, influence institutional structures or contribute to changes in everyday practices and behaviour. These developments may reinforce one another, but they do not necessarily occur at the same time.

It is important to distinguish replication and implementation from actual adoption. Introducing reusable packaging does not automatically mean that customers use it consistently, businesses maintain the system or institutions establish lasting requirements.

Three dimensions of scaling

Drawing on the framework developed by Riddell and Moore (2015), the report uses three complementary dimensions to examine the replication cases:



Scaling Out

Transferring and adapting reusable packaging solutions to new locations, organisations, events or user groups.

Scaling Out involves introducing an existing solution or approach in a new context. This includes sharing knowledge and experience and adapting the solution to local infrastructure, business operations, user needs and organisational conditions. Replication rarely means creating an identical copy – the aim is to build on existing experience while developing a solution that works in a new setting.

Example

Introducing a reuse system at a new event, takeaway business, institution or in another municipality, based on experience from earlier pilots. This may involve adapting container types, return arrangements, payment systems and staff routines to the local context.



Scaling Up

Seeking changes in policies, procurement requirements, institutional arrangements or other structures that can support wider implementation.

Scaling Up focuses on the institutional conditions that influence whether reusable packaging can be adopted and sustained. This may involve legislation, procurement practices, formal organisational commitments, investment frameworks or coordination between public and private actors. Institutional support can help overcome barriers that individual businesses cannot address alone and create more stable conditions for implementation.

Example

Including reuse requirements in public procurement, establishing shared washing infrastructure, introducing municipal guidelines or event permit conditions, or creating policies that support reusable packaging in specific sectors.



Scaling Deep

Seeking changes in customer behaviour, staff routines, organisational practices and everyday habits that support repeated use.

Scaling Deep addresses the social, behavioural and organisational changes needed to make reusable packaging a familiar part of everyday life. This may involve changing consumer habits, training and engaging staff, integrating new routines into daily operations or challenging established social norms. Providing infrastructure and raising awareness are important, but reuse systems must also be convenient and easy to use for customers and staff.

Example

Encouraging customers to choose reusable containers, training staff to manage return systems, integrating collection and washing routines into everyday operations, or using communication campaigns to support return behaviour and normalise reuse.

The three scaling dimensions are interconnected and may overlap within individual cases. They are used to identify relevant activities and ambitions rather than to measure achieved impact. Introducing reusable packaging, influencing institutional arrangements or encouraging new behaviours does not necessarily demonstrate lasting change.

From theory to practical implementation

Experiences from one setting cannot always be transferred directly to another. Local infrastructure, financial conditions, organisational capacity and user needs influence whether a reusable packaging solution can be implemented successfully (Tsing, 2012).

Institutional timing may also affect implementation. Procurement processes, contract renewals, new regulations and changing political priorities can create opportunities to introduce or expand reuse systems (Kingdon, 1995; Carney, 2024). Conversely, limited resources, competing priorities, inadequate infrastructure and weak incentives can hinder implementation or continuity (Dorsey & Patel, 2025; OECD, 2025).

These considerations underline the importance of treating replication as a process of testing, adaptation and learning rather than simply transferring a successful pilot. The Change(K)now! cases are therefore examined to identify practical enabling conditions, barriers and lessons across strategic initiatives, institutional catering, events and takeaway services.

The analysis includes both implemented initiatives and cases still in planning or exploration. It also considers experiences with limited adoption, as these can reveal important barriers and opportunities for improvement. The aim is to understand how reusable food and beverage packaging solutions can be introduced, adapted and supported in different settings – and what is needed for their wider and more sustained use.

Methodology: defining and categorising replication

This report uses a common framework to document and compare how reusable food and beverage packaging solutions have been transferred, adapted and implemented through Change(K)now!. The 56 cases are classified by setting, replication type, implementation status and scaling dimensions to identify patterns, practical barriers and lessons for future implementation.

What do we mean by replication?

For this report, a replication case involves the transfer, adaptation, expansion or further development of solutions and experiences from earlier Change(K)now! pilots. Cases may involve project partners or external organisations and must be directly or indirectly linked to Change(K)now! activities or knowledge exchange.

Case categories

Cases are grouped into four categories according to their primary setting or focus:

- **Strategic:** Initiatives focused on strategies, policies, guidelines or institutional frameworks supporting reusable packaging.
- **Institutional:** Initiatives introducing or developing reuse systems within organisations or institutions, including schools and catering environments.
- **Event:** Initiatives applying reusable packaging solutions at festivals, sports events, cultural activities and other organised public events.
- **Takeaway:** Initiatives involving reusable packaging for takeaway food and beverages, including markets, cafés, retail settings and food service operations.

Each case is assigned one primary category.

Replication types

Cases are classified according to the organisational relationship between the original initiative and the replication effort:

- **Internal:** Transferring, adapting or expanding a solution within the same organisation.
- **Cross-partner:** Transferring or adapting a solution or approach developed by another Change(K)now! project partner.
- **External:** An organisation outside the project partnership adopting or exploring the adoption of a solution inspired by Change(K)now!.

Each case is assigned one replication type.

Implementation status

Cases are classified according to their stage of development at the time of data collection:

- **Exploring:** Replication opportunities are being investigated, but a concrete implementation plan has not yet been established.
- **Planning:** A replication initiative is being prepared, with plans or arrangements being developed ahead of implementation.
- **Implemented:** A solution has been introduced or tested in practice, regardless of its level of adoption or whether implementation is continuing.

Implementation status describes progress, not necessarily successful adoption, continued operation or long-term impact.

Scaling dimensions

Each case is classified according to the Scaling Out, Scaling Up and Scaling Deep framework introduced earlier in the report. Scaling Out concerns transfer to new settings, Scaling Up concerns efforts to influence institutional conditions, and Scaling Deep concerns efforts to change everyday practices and behaviour.

A case may involve more than one dimension. The classifications describe relevant activities and ambitions rather than demonstrated outcomes.

What counts as one case?

A replication case is defined as one coherent initiative or rollout phase.

A coordinated rollout involving several locations may count as one case if it forms part of the same initiative. A subsequent rollout phase may be counted separately when it represents a distinct initiative.

This avoids automatically counting every participating location as an individual replication case.

Data collection and analysis

Information was collected through written surveys, collaborative workshops and stakeholder interviews with project managers across the Baltic Sea Region.

The analysis combines quantitative summaries of the documented cases with qualitative examination of how reusable packaging solutions were adapted, which conditions supported or hindered implementation, and what lessons can inform future replication.

The cases represent different stages of development, and the available evidence varies accordingly. Some document practical implementation and initial results, while others primarily describe plans, intentions or early experiences.

The findings should therefore be understood as lessons from documented Change(K)now! replication activities, rather than as a representative assessment of all reusable packaging initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region. The analysis identifies implementation experiences, enabling conditions and barriers, but does not provide a systematic measurement of long-term adoption or environmental impact.

Quantitative summary

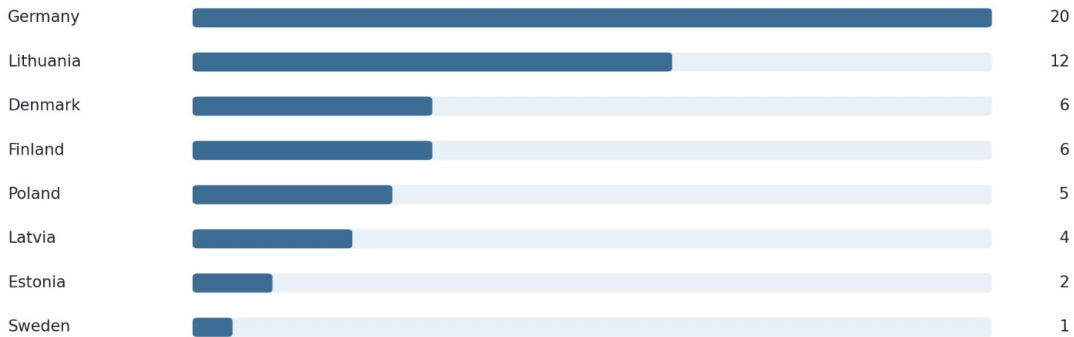
The following quantitative overview presents the distribution and progress of 56 documented Change(K)now! replication cases across eight countries. It shows where reusable food and beverage packaging solutions and approaches have been transferred, which organisations have been involved, and how far implementation has progressed.

The figures also illustrate differences between case categories and the scaling dimensions associated with the initiatives. They describe documented replication activities rather than their long-term impact.

Replication reach across 56 cases



Cases by country



Replication type



Replication type describes how initiatives have spread, not their implementation status or long-term impact.

The 56 documented cases span eight countries, demonstrating how solutions and experiences for reusable food packaging have been transferred to different local and organisational settings. Germany

accounts for the largest number of cases (20), followed by Lithuania (12), with the remaining cases distributed across Denmark, Finland, Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Sweden.

Replication also extends beyond the original project partnership. Of the 56 cases, 27 involve external organisations, while 17 are internal replications and 12 are cross-partner replications. This highlights the role of knowledge exchange, collaboration and engagement with new actors in expanding work on reusable food and beverage packaging.

The figures demonstrate the geographical and organisational reach of the documented activities, although differences in case numbers may also reflect variation in project activities and documentation.

Implementation status across 56 cases



Implementation status by category

Category	Implemented	Planning	Exploring	Total
Strategic	3	6	1	10
Institutional	4	1	1	6
Event	21	2	0	23
Takeaway	13	2	2	17
Total	41	11	4	56

Implementation status indicates the stage of an initiative, not its long-term success or environmental impact.

Of the 56 documented replication cases, 41 are classified as implemented, 11 as planning and four as exploring. This shows that a substantial proportion of the initiatives have progressed to practical introduction or testing of reusable packaging solutions.

Implementation varies between categories. Events have the highest proportion of implemented cases (21 of 23), followed by takeaway initiatives (13 of 17). In contrast, six of the ten strategic initiatives remain in planning.

These differences reflect the conditions and timelines of implementation. Events often provide defined opportunities to introduce and test reuse systems, while strategic initiatives may depend on procurement cycles, political decisions and institutional coordination. The figures should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that one category is inherently more successful than another.

Implementation status indicates progress, but not necessarily continued operation, repeated use or sustained adoption.

Scaling dimensions across 56 cases



Scaling dimensions by category

Category	Out	Up	Deep	Cases
Strategic	10	10	7	10
Institutional	6	0	4	6
Event	23	6	16	23
Takeaway	17	4	14	17
Total	56	20	41	56

A case may involve multiple scaling dimensions.

All 56 documented cases are classified as involving Scaling Out, reflecting the transfer or adaptation of reusable packaging solutions and approaches to new settings. In addition, 20 cases involve Scaling Up and 41 involve Scaling Deep. Individual cases may involve more than one dimension.

The distribution reflects differences in the practical focus of the initiatives. All ten strategic cases involve Scaling Up, particularly through work on policies, procurement and institutional arrangements. Scaling Deep is especially prominent in takeaway initiatives (14 of 17) and events (16 of 23), where reuse often depends on changes in staff routines, customer participation and return practices.

These patterns highlight the different conditions involved in expanding reusable packaging. Introducing solutions in new settings, creating supportive institutional arrangements and encouraging everyday use are complementary activities. The classifications describe the focus of the initiatives rather than evidence of lasting institutional or behavioural change.

Total replication case overview

The following table provides an overview of all 56 replication cases identified within the Change(K)now! project.

#	Case	Country	Category	Replication type	Status	Scaling dimensions
1	Moving from ad-hoc to green	Germany	Strategic	External	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep

#	Case	Country	Category	Replication type	Status	Scaling dimensions
	event standards in Pomerania					
2	Helping all Hamburg schools switch to reusable catering systems	Germany	Strategic	Internal	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep
3	Adding green guidelines to event permits in Copenhagen	Denmark	Strategic	Internal	Implemented	Out, Up
4	Making food packaging a strategic priority in Asikkala	Finland	Strategic	External	Planning	Out, Up, Deep
5	Turning climate goals into practical actions for Hollola food services	Finland	Strategic	External	Planning	Out, Up, Deep
6	Connecting municipal strategy with daily kitchen operations in Kerava	Finland	Strategic	External	Planning	Out, Up, Deep
7	Getting Orimattila ready for new European packaging rules	Finland	Strategic	External	Planning	Out, Up, Deep
8	Moving to a permanent ban on single-use plastic in Anykščiai	Lithuania	Strategic	Internal	Planning	Out, Up, Deep
9	Changing national laws to empower Latvian municipalities in the shift to reuse	Latvia	Strategic	External	Planning	Out, Up
10	Making green standards the new rules for events in Poland	Poland	Strategic	Cross-partner	Exploring	Out, Up
11	Switching to reusable yogurt cups in a Hamburg school	Germany	Institutional	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep
12	Cutting waste in Eimsbüttel through a district-wide reusable system	Germany	Institutional	Internal	Exploring	Out
13	Using school payment cards for reusable catering in Hamburg	Germany	Institutional	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep
14	Expanding the use of reusable containers in the Copenhagen school meal programme	Denmark	Institutional	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep
15	Balancing fresh food and zero	Estonia	Institutional	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep

#	Case	Country	Category	Replication type	Status	Scaling dimensions
	waste in Estonian school canteens					
16	Ditching single-use takeaway at the Anykščiai school canteen	Lithuania	Institutional	External	Planning	Out
17	Running reusable cups across the Hamburg Triathlon finish line	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
18	Navigating weather, waste, and reusable cups at IRONMAN Hamburg	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
19	Finding the right rhythm for reusable tableware at the Amplifire hip-hop festival in Hamburg	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
20	Scaling beyond cups to complete reusable catering at MS Dockville festival	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
21	Getting reusable wine glasses into full swing at Hamburg's Elbjazz festival	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
22	Keeping up with a 32-hour nonstop rave using reusables at Hamburg's Habitat Festival	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
23	Pairing old-school beats with new-school reusables at Hamburg's Ü30 hip-hop festival	Germany	Event	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
24	Setting a circular game plan for local sports at a Berlin basketball club	Germany	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Deep
25	Shifting gears from one-off pilots to standard reusable catering at the Copenhagen Sprint	Denmark	Event	Internal	Implemented	Out, Up
26	Harvesting learnings from a decentralized reusable model at Finland's Lake Saimaa Harvest Festival	Finland	Event	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep
27	Finding the right fit for reusable	Lithuania	Event	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep

#	Case	Country	Category	Replication type	Status	Scaling dimensions
	dishes at Lithuania's Purpurinis vakaras poetry festival					
28	Putting reusable dishes on the move at the Anykščiai Town Festival	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Up
29	Going off-road with reusable dishes at Lithuania's World Motocross Championship	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep
30	Turning daily camp meals into a hands-on sustainability lesson in Anykščiai	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Deep
31	Programming circular catering habits at a 24-day robotics camp in Anykščiai	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Up
32	Preserving heritage and cutting waste at an Anykščiai museum camp	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Up
33	Opening a new chapter for reusable catering at an Anykščiai library camp	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out
34	Cross-district expansion with reusable catering for Lithuanian youth camps	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Deep
35	Turning training into action with circular youth camp catering in Anykščiai	Lithuania	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out, Deep
36	Turning municipal reuse regulations into practice at Liepāja's Līvas Market	Latvia	Event	Internal	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep
37	Coordinating a unified deposit return network for 130,000 visitors in Riga	Latvia	Event	Cross-partner	Implemented	Out
38	Building community readiness for circular dining in Poland's rural tourism sector	Poland	Event	External	Planning	Out, Deep

#	Case	Country	Category	Replication type	Status	Scaling dimensions
39	Turning abstract event policies into practical reusable checklists for Swedish NGOs	Sweden	Event	Cross-partner	Planning	Out
40	Designing accessible reuse systems for a diverse weekly market in Hamburg-Billstedt	Germany	Takeaway	Internal	Planning	Out, Up, Deep
41	Bringing reusable and customer containers to weekly food markets in Cuxhaven	Germany	Takeaway	External	Exploring	Out
42	Scaling reusable takeaway from pilot to company-wide operations across Hamburg's weekly markets	Germany	Takeaway	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep
43	Integrating reusable steel containers into daily shopping mall counter sales in Flensburg	Germany	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
44	Learning from resistance to reusable takeaway at Hamburg's Goldbekmarkt	Germany	Takeaway	External	Exploring	Out
45	Activating counter staff to establish permanent reusable takeaway in Hamburg-Sasel	Germany	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
46	Bringing reusable steel containers to fresh food and lunch counters in Hamburg-Nord	Germany	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
47	Expanding the urban reuse system across municipal borders	Denmark	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep
48	Circulating reusable cups at Copenhagen Zoo	Denmark	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
49	Scaling reuse in a global chain	Denmark	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep
50	Simplifying reusable takeaway with a bring-or-buy lunch model in Tallinn	Estonia	Takeaway	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep
51	Adapting reusable containers for direct farm sales in Finland's lake region	Finland	Takeaway	Internal	Implemented	Out, Deep

#	Case	Country	Category	Replication type	Status	Scaling dimensions
52	Meeting growing customer demand for reusable takeaway	Lithuania	Takeaway	Internal	Planning	Out, Deep
53	Navigating digital and voluntary hurdles in Liepāja's coastal takeaway trials	Latvia	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Up, Deep
54	Making reusable takeaway easy for campers at a Polish campsite	Poland	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out
55	Rethinking office lunches with reusable jars in Gdańsk	Poland	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Deep
56	Bringing circular catering standards into daily social enterprise operations in Cieszyn	Poland	Takeaway	External	Implemented	Out, Deep

Full replication case documentation

STRATEGIC CASES

These strategic cases explore how municipalities and organisations can create the institutional conditions for reusable packaging solutions to move beyond individual projects. They focus on policies, procurement practices, guidelines and organisational processes that influence whether reuse can become part of long-term planning and decision-making.

Strategic replication often involves longer decision-making processes, where political priorities, existing contracts and institutional responsibilities affect the pace of implementation. The cases therefore illustrate both the opportunities and challenges of translating circular ambitions into practical action.

The cases involve three scaling dimensions:

- **Scaling Out:** Transferring and adapting strategic approaches, guidelines and frameworks across organisations, municipalities and regions.
- **Scaling Up:** Influencing policies, procurement requirements and institutional structures that support the wider adoption of reuse.
- **Scaling Deep:** Encouraging changes in organisational priorities, decision-making routines and institutional practices.

Together, the cases highlight how strategic replication can help establish more supportive conditions for reuse, while demonstrating that institutional ambitions do not necessarily lead to immediate implementation.

Case 1: Moving from ad-hoc to green event standards in Pomerania

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Loecknitz, Greifswald, Neubrandenburg, and Schwedt, Germany	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion e.V. "Pomerania" recognized a significant environmental challenge within its Information and Advisory Network (SID). While the network organizes numerous public events and workshops for small and medium-sized enterprises, sustainability was not consistently integrated into the planning process across its various regional offices. The strategic vision was to move beyond ad-hoc efforts and establish a formal framework that ensures environmental considerations are a natural part of every event. By adopting these guidelines, the organization aimed to reduce its ecological footprint while simultaneously acting as a credible role model for the businesses it advises, demonstrating that sustainable resource management is a practical and necessary component of regional development.

THE JOURNEY

The process began by adapting a strategic framework from a partner in the Pomerania Euroregion to fit the specific operational context of the German SID network. This expansion of a proven concept to four different cities (scaling out) required a complete revision of event management practices. The network introduced new operational guidelines and sustainability-oriented procurement criteria (scaling up) that now govern the selection of venues, catering, and materials. By embedding these requirements into routine decision-making, the organization is fostering a deeper commitment to sustainability within its administrative culture (scaling deep). Currently, the guidelines are applied to at least 16 events annually, prioritizing digital communication, regional catering, and the avoidance of single-use plastics. However, the journey is not without its barriers. The organization acknowledges that while the framework is implemented, specific quantitative data on carbon and waste reduction is not yet fully verified and will require long-term monitoring. This highlights a common challenge in strategic transitions: the need for robust data collection to move from policy implementation to proven environmental impact.

Case 2: Helping all Hamburg schools switch to reusable catering systems

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

In Hamburg, the organization Ökomarkt e.V. partnered with the State Institute for Training and Quality Development in Schools to address a critical gap in the transition to circular school catering. While individual pilot projects often show success, the strategic challenge lies in ensuring that schools have the tools to implement reusable systems independently and sustainably over the long term. The vision was to move beyond isolated interventions and create a centralized resource that empowers Environment and Climate Schools across the city to reduce single-use waste. By integrating expert knowledge into the official advisory platforms for teachers and school administrators, the project aimed to make reusable systems the new norm in school canteens, ensuring that environmental responsibility becomes a permanent part of the institutional framework.

THE JOURNEY

The process involved synthesizing key findings from various pilot and replication cases into a comprehensive, generic guide designed to fit schools with diverse requirements and conditions. This guide was then shared through the State Institute’s digital platforms, specifically within the Advisory Service for Environment and Climate Schools, to provide free and permanent access for educational staff. This institutional integration allows the initiative to reach a significantly larger number of schools (Scaling Out) through official channels (Scaling Up). By providing a clear roadmap for independent implementation, the project fosters a deeper cultural shift within the school system, encouraging a move away from a throw-away mentality (Scaling Deep). However, the journey was not without its challenges, as the primary barrier identified was the complex coordination and communication required between the various stakeholders involved in the educational and environmental sectors. While the guide is now completed and available, the actual quantitative impact in terms of reduced packaging and CO2 emissions is still being estimated as schools begin to adopt the recommendations. This case demonstrates that strategic scaling requires not just practical solutions, but also the institutionalization of knowledge to overcome the limitations of time-bound projects.

Case 3: Adding green guidelines to event permits in Copenhagen

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Copenhagen, Denmark	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS

**SCALING OUT**

**SCALING UP**

**SCALING DEEP**

THE VISION

The City of Copenhagen is taking a strategic step to reduce resource consumption and waste generated by public events. Large-scale gatherings in public spaces often rely on single-use plastic, creating a significant environmental footprint. To address this, the municipal unit responsible for event permissions has initiated a process to embed circular principles directly into the city's administrative framework. The vision is to move beyond individual pilot projects and make reusable packaging the standard choice for all event organisers. By providing clear guidance and promoting washable solutions as the preferred alternative to single-use plastic cups, the city aims to simplify the transition for organisers while supporting broader sustainability goals. This institutional shift ensures that knowledge gained from practical testing becomes a permanent part of municipal operations.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involves integrating specific reuse recommendations into the official guidance that every organiser encounters when applying for an event permit. This approach allows the city to expand the reach of circular solutions to a wider range of events (scaling out) while embedding the practice into formal policy structures (scaling up). The guidance encourages organisers to choose rental solutions that allow cups to circulate across different events rather than producing event-specific items that limit future use. It also directs them toward integrated services that handle collection and washing. While this strategic integration has successfully transferred knowledge into regular municipal functions, several barriers remain. Because the current guidance is primarily advisory, it does not automatically guarantee uptake by every organiser, many of whom face varying logistical and financial constraints. Furthermore, ensuring compatibility between different packaging systems and establishing sufficient return infrastructure across the city continues to be a challenge. Although quantitative data on the exact number of events adopting these systems is still being monitored, the qualitative success is evident in the creation of a coherent pathway for reuse. This institutional shift ensures that knowledge gained from practical testing is transferred into regular municipal functions, bridging the gap between project-based activities and long-term municipal practice.

Case 4: Making food packaging a strategic priority in Asikkala

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Asikkala Municipality, Finland	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

Asikkala Municipality has a long-standing commitment to environmental responsibility, particularly within its food services where it has previously focused on reducing food waste and promoting sustainable food choices. However, a significant challenge remained: food packaging was often overlooked in high-level policy, despite its heavy resource consumption and the increasing pressure of international regulations. The vision for this initiative was to bridge the gap between operational kitchen practices and municipal strategy. By involving key stakeholders from both the administrative and catering sectors, the municipality aimed to transform food packaging from a minor operational detail into a core component of its climate planning and procurement guidance. The goal was to ensure that sustainability is not just an isolated project but a fundamental part of how the municipality plans its future services and interacts with the market.

THE JOURNEY

The process was initiated in April 2026 through a series of strategic workshops and capacity-building activities. Rather than drafting entirely new documents, the municipality focused on reviewing existing policies to identify where circular economy principles could support current objectives (Scaling Up). Simultaneously, practical tools such as readiness checklists and procurement roadmaps were introduced to prepare institutional catering services, such as schools and hospitals, for future changes (Scaling Out). These efforts successfully involved seven key stakeholders and created a foundation for data-driven decision-making. However, the journey also highlighted significant barriers. Packaging is still frequently perceived as a purely operational issue, and the municipality must navigate limited resources and a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape. Furthermore, because procurement cycles are often fixed years in advance, the adoption of formal new criteria is currently in a planning phase rather than full implementation. Despite these delays, the process has fostered a deeper cultural change (Scaling Deep) by strengthening the dialogue between municipal departments and suppliers, ensuring that the organization is prepared to implement circular requirements as soon as the next procurement window opens.



Case 5: Turning climate goals into practical actions for Hollola food services

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hollola Municipality, Finland	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The Municipality of Hollola is actively working to advance its climate and circular economy objectives through its municipal strategy and procurement policies. Recognizing that food packaging waste is an emerging issue linked to resource efficiency and future regulatory requirements, the municipality sought to move beyond viewing packaging as a purely operational concern. The vision was to explore how strategic sustainability goals could be translated into practical actions within municipal food services. By participating in regional learning activities and local workshops, Hollola aimed to build the organizational capacity necessary to integrate circular economy principles into its long-term planning and future development activities, ensuring that environmental objectives are reflected in every stage of the food service value chain.

THE JOURNEY

The process began in April 2026 with a joint replication workshop where representatives from Hollola and the neighboring municipality of Orimattila explored how to adapt proven strategic frameworks to their local context (Scaling Out). The municipality utilized practical tools, such as readiness checklists and procurement roadmaps, to assess their current standing and prepare for future food service tenders. This collaborative approach fostered a stronger dialogue between municipal departments, food service professionals, and procurement actors (Scaling Deep). While the initiative successfully involved three key stakeholders from Hollola and increased overall preparedness, the journey also revealed significant barriers. Packaging is still frequently perceived as an operational detail rather than a strategic priority, and the municipality must balance its green ambitions with limited resources and fixed procurement cycles. Although no formal new strategies have been adopted yet, the municipality has significantly increased its readiness to incorporate circular requirements into future tender documents (Scaling Up). The primary learning has been that aligning these efforts with the natural timing of strategy revisions is essential for embedding circularity into the municipality's long-term governance.



Case 6: Connecting municipal strategy with daily kitchen operations in Kerava

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Kerava, Finland	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS

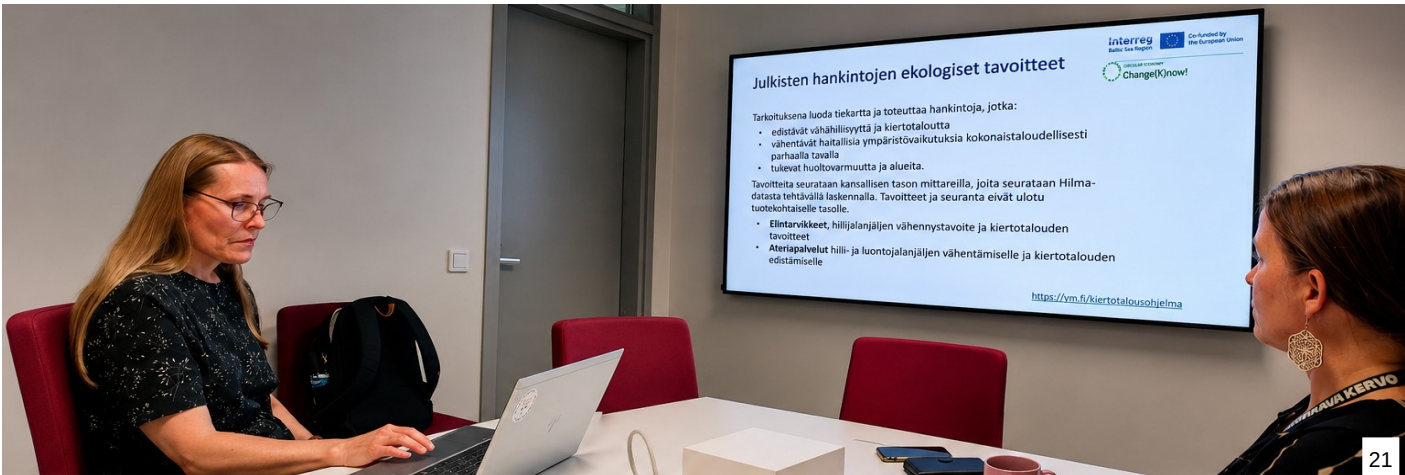


THE VISION

The City of Kerava has already embedded sustainability and circular economy themes into its core municipal strategy, which is actively monitored across all departments. The city's catering services are advanced, utilizing digital systems to calculate carbon footprints and monitor nutritional standards. However, a specific strategic focus on food packaging was needed to bridge the gap between these high-level policies and daily kitchen operations. The vision for this initiative was to utilize the city's new strategy as a foundation for integrating circular economy principles into future procurement arrangements. By identifying packaging not just as a waste issue but as a strategic lever, Kerava aimed to prepare its organization for a transition toward more sustainable and regulated food delivery systems, ensuring that environmental objectives are reflected in every stage of the value chain.

THE JOURNEY

In August 2026, the city initiated a strategic dialogue to assess how existing policies could support circular packaging goals. This involved a thorough review of the city strategy and procurement guidelines to identify future decision points and align them with national ecological objectives (Scaling Up). To support this transition, practical tools developed through Change(K)now, such as readiness checklists and procurement roadmaps, were introduced and adapted to Kerava's local context to help catering managers evaluate market solutions and supplier information (Scaling Out). The process has successfully increased organizational readiness and fostered a shared understanding of the complexity involved in managing up to 1,000 different product items. However, significant barriers remain. The city is currently bound by a joint procurement agreement that limits independent purchasing, meaning substantial changes must wait for the next contract period. Additionally, accurately measuring packaging waste remains a challenge because waste data is often shared across multiple municipal functions, making it difficult to isolate the impact of catering services. Despite these constraints, the initiative has strengthened the internal culture by connecting strategic objectives with operational reality (Scaling Deep), ensuring that Kerava is well-positioned to implement new sustainability criteria as soon as the contractual window opens.



Case 7: Getting Orimattila ready for new European packaging rules

LOCATION

Orimattila, Finland

CATEGORY

Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



SCALING OUT



SCALING UP



SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

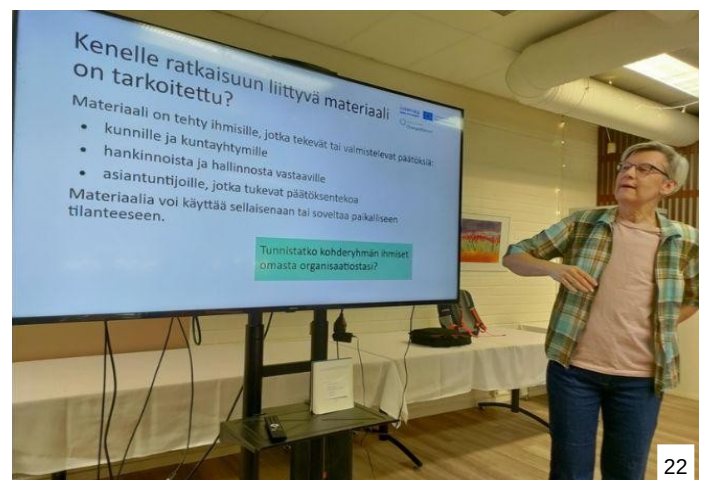
In the municipality of Orimattila, single-use food packaging from municipal catering in schools and care facilities has historically been treated as an operational waste issue handled inside individual kitchens. However, rising packaging volumes, resource pressures, and forthcoming European requirements such as the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation demand a more coordinated approach. In April 2026, the municipality engaged in a targeted effort to bridge this gap. Supported by the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme and Smart & Lean Hub, Orimattila set out to connect sustainable food packaging directly to its broader municipal climate goals, strategic plans, and public purchasing procedures. The strategic ambition was to address packaging waste at its origin by changing procurement and contract structures long before food supplies reach institutional kitchens.

THE JOURNEY

The process began with preparatory webinars and a local workshop on 9 April 2026, bringing together nine Orimattila representatives from municipal catering, administration, and public procurement, alongside delegates from neighbouring Hollola. Rather than starting from scratch, Orimattila adapted a strategic framework, readiness checklists, and twenty-one circular procurement criteria originally tested in Lahti. By transferring these proven tools across municipal borders (Scaling out), the municipality assessed how circular packaging demands could be integrated into future tenders.

Because this initiative remains in the exploratory and planning stages, no formal political decisions or mandatory contract clauses have been adopted yet, and no measurable waste or carbon reductions can be documented. Practical progress remains constrained by limited administrative resources, competing municipal priorities, and multi-year supplier contracts that cannot be renegotiated overnight.

Nevertheless, the process achieved a decisive shift in organizational awareness (Scaling deep), transforming food packaging from an isolated kitchen task into a joint strategic agenda between kitchen managers and procurement officers. Orimattila is now preparing for upcoming European regulatory obligations by aligning circular criteria with scheduled municipal strategy revisions and upcoming tender cycles (Scaling up), ensuring clear requirements are ready when food contracts next reopen.



Case 8: Moving to a permanent ban on single-use plastic in Anykščiai

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai District, Lithuania	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Anykščiai District Municipality is currently transitioning from a successful experimental phase to a permanent, district-wide commitment to circularity. The strategic vision is to eliminate single-use plastic waste from all public events held within the district starting in 2027. By moving beyond voluntary participation, the municipality aims to establish reusable or non-plastic alternatives as the mandatory standard for all traders and service providers. This shift addresses the persistent problem of packaging waste generated during festivals and public gatherings, ensuring that the environmental benefits observed during earlier trials become a lasting part of the district's operational framework. The goal is to secure long-term results that do not depend on the individual choices of businesses but are instead anchored in a clear, municipal-wide policy.

THE JOURNEY

The process began with a voluntary, deposit-based reusable dishware system that demonstrated the feasibility of circular solutions on a local scale. To ensure these results are sustained and expanded, the Municipality Administration is now translating these experiences into a binding regulatory measure (Scaling up). This involves the preparation of a formal draft decision for the Municipal Council which, if adopted, will apply the ban to every public event across the entire district (Scaling out). While the transition promises a significant reduction in plastic waste and a shift in local consumption culture (Scaling deep), the journey includes several critical learning points and potential barriers. The municipality has identified risks such as resistance from traders and service providers who may be concerned about the additional costs and logistical obligations associated with non-plastic alternatives. Furthermore, the success of the initiative is currently dependent on formal political adoption and the development of a robust enforcement plan. To move forward, the administration is focusing on early consultation with event organizers and securing the necessary political support to transition from the planning phase to full implementation by 2027.

Case 9: Changing national laws to empower Latvian municipalities in the shift to reuse

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Riga, Latvia	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The initiative in Riga, led by the Riga Municipality in collaboration with the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, addresses a fundamental gap in the transition toward a circular economy. While local pilots have successfully demonstrated the viability of reusable cup systems at public events, municipalities have historically lacked the legal authority to enforce these sustainable practices more broadly. The strategic vision is to transform these local insights into a robust national policy framework that empowers all Latvian municipalities to restrict single-use plastic packaging. By addressing the legislative and regulatory barriers that currently limit local action, the project aims to create a coherent environment where reusable alternatives become the standard rather than the exception, ultimately reducing waste generation across the entire country.

THE JOURNEY

The process began by identifying the specific constraints within the existing legislative framework that hindered the expansion of waste prevention measures. To move from local experimentation to systemic change (Scaling up), the partners have focused on advocating for amendments to national waste management legislation, specifically targeting the Law of Waste Reduction and Cabinet Regulation No. 397. These proposed changes aim to provide a clear regulatory mandate, allowing cities to introduce environmental requirements within their own procurement processes and public spaces. This approach ensures that the success seen in Riga can be replicated by other municipalities (Scaling out). However, the journey has not been without significant challenges. The replication process is currently in the planning phase, as legislative procedures are inherently lengthy and complex. Building consensus among multiple stakeholders, including national ministries and various local government bodies, requires extensive consultation and evidence gathering. While the transition toward a culture of reuse is the ultimate goal, the current focus remains on overcoming administrative hurdles and aligning political interests. The next steps involve continued close cooperation with national institutions to secure the formal approval of these policy changes, which will eventually provide the legal tools necessary for effective waste prevention nationwide.

Case 10: Making green standards the new rules for events in Poland

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Poland	Strategic

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The Polish NGO Folkodisko, an organization dedicated to event management, has recognized the need to move beyond temporary environmental initiatives toward a more permanent structural change. Their vision is to establish a formal framework for sustainability by adopting proven international standards for green events. By focusing on the strategic level, the organization aims to ensure that environmental considerations are not just an afterthought for individual projects but are instead a fundamental part of their operational identity. This approach addresses the problem of inconsistent sustainability practices by creating a clear, policy-driven mandate for all future activities.

THE JOURNEY

The process began with the exploration of existing green event guidelines developed by international partners (Scaling out). The primary result achieved so far is the formal inclusion of these guidelines into the NGO's internal policy (Scaling Up). This represents a significant step in institutionalizing green practices, ensuring that sustainability becomes a requirement for procurement and planning. However, the journey is currently in the early stages of exploration, and the organization is still defining how these high-level policy goals will translate into concrete actions on the ground. A notable barrier is the lack of specific data regarding the practical scale and the measurable impact, such as waste reduction or carbon savings, which are yet to be determined. While the strategic foundation is now in place, the transition from policy to practice remains the next major challenge. This case highlights that while changing an organization's "rules of the game" is a vital success, the actual implementation requires a secondary phase of practical testing and resource allocation to overcome the gap between strategic intent and operational reality.

Key lessons and future scaling through strategic initiatives

The strategic cases highlight three important lessons for supporting the wider adoption of reusable packaging.

First, institutional change requires coordination and commitment. Municipalities, public authorities and other organisations can create favourable conditions for reuse, but progress depends on clear responsibilities, stakeholder cooperation and sustained political or organisational support.

Second, strategic replication must reflect local conditions. Procurement procedures, existing contracts, regulatory frameworks and institutional priorities vary between settings. Strategic approaches therefore need adaptation rather than direct transfer.

Third, planning and implementation follow different timelines. Developing guidelines, policies and procurement requirements can involve lengthy decision-making processes. Progress should therefore be assessed in relation to both institutional developments and practical implementation.

Looking ahead, procurement requirements, municipal policies and shared organisational frameworks may help create more consistent conditions for reuse. Scaling Out can transfer strategic approaches between organisations, while Scaling Up and Scaling Deep can support changes in institutional structures and everyday decision-making.

Overall, the cases demonstrate that strategic replication depends on translating institutional ambitions into clear responsibilities, practical requirements and sustained action.

INSTITUTIONAL CATERING CASES

These institutional catering cases explore how reusable packaging solutions can be transferred and adapted to schools, vocational centres and public catering environments. They focus on integrating reusable cups, bowls and containers into established meal services, where predictable routines and recurring user groups can create favourable conditions for reuse.

At the same time, implementation must fit existing infrastructure, catering operations and institutional responsibilities. The cases illustrate how practical adaptations and stakeholder coordination influence whether reusable packaging can become part of everyday operations.

The cases primarily involve two scaling dimensions:

- **Scaling Out:** Transferring and adapting reusable packaging solutions to new institutions, user groups and catering environments.
- **Scaling Deep:** Supporting changes in staff routines, organisational practices and everyday habits that enable repeated use.

Although none of the six cases is classified as Scaling Up, procurement requirements, catering contracts and institutional commitments may provide opportunities for future Scaling Up.

Case 11: Switching to reusable yogurt cups in a Hamburg school

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Institutional

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Alexander von Humboldt Gymnasium in Hamburg, in collaboration with the catering company Mammas Canteen and the organization Ökomarkt e.V., has initiated a project to address the environmental impact of single-use plastic in school catering. Starting in August 2026, the school is replacing disposable yogurt cups with a circular reusable system. The strategic vision behind this initiative is to reduce single-use packaging waste and make school meals more sustainable. By implementing a practical solution within a secondary school setting, the partners aim to demonstrate that circular economy principles can be integrated into daily institutional routines, solving the problem of high-volume plastic consumption at the source.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation of the reusable system is based on a simple deposit model where pupils pay one euro for a yogurt cup and receive the deposit back upon returning it to the canteen. The cups are then cleaned on-site by kitchen staff using the existing washing infrastructure. While the process is straightforward, the project has identified that effective coordination between various stakeholders, including school councils, environmental coordinators, and kitchen management, is a critical factor and a potential barrier to smooth operations. Although quantitative data on the exact kilograms of packaging reduced is still being collected, the project shows significant potential for growth (Scaling Out) as Mammas Canteen serves 105 schools in total. If the pilot proves feasible for the kitchen staff, the system could be expanded across this entire network. Furthermore, the initiative aims to foster a culture of sustainability among students (Scaling Deep) by making reusable choices a standard part of their school experience. The next steps involve refining the integration of the cups into kitchen workflows and ensuring that students are fully informed about the new system as the school year begins.

Case 12: Cutting waste in Eimsbüttel through a district-wide reusable system

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg (Eimsbüttel), Germany	Institutional

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The district of Eimsbüttel in Hamburg is taking a proactive stance against the environmental burden of single-use packaging within its public catering services. By collaborating with the catering organizations Alraune and Steet, the district office aims to transform school catering into a more sustainable model. The strategic vision is centered on replacing disposable items with reusable cups and bowls, addressing the growing volume of waste generated in canteens. This initiative is driven by the Climate Team at the Bezirksamt Eimsbüttel and the organization Ökomarkt, focusing on creating a circular system that can be integrated into the daily operations of educational and leisure facilities. The primary goal is to reduce single-use packaging and ensure that school catering aligns with broader sustainability targets.

THE JOURNEY

The process is currently in the exploration phase, where the focus is on adapting existing reusable models to fit the specific needs of different catering environments. While the catering company Steet operates a single canteen in a leisure center, the organization Alraune manages multiple locations across the city, presenting a significant opportunity for expanding the reach of the solution (Scaling Out). However, the journey has highlighted the complexity of coordinating a diverse group of stakeholders, including school staff and restaurant managers. One of the primary barriers identified is the challenge of establishing efficient communication channels between all involved parties, which has impacted the speed of planning. Despite these logistical hurdles, the project is moving toward a formal implementation phase where the exact number of participating canteens will be determined. By focusing on changing the underlying practices and culture of food service, the partners aim to achieve a measurable reduction in packaging waste and carbon emissions. While specific quantitative impacts are still being estimated, the next concrete steps involve direct consultations between the catering companies and technical experts to finalize the replication plan. This case demonstrates that even in the early stages, the transition to reusables requires strong district-level leadership and a willingness to navigate complex stakeholder landscapes.

Case 13: Using school payment cards for reusable catering in Hamburg

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Institutional

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In August 2026, the catering company Kitz Catering, in collaboration with Ökomarkt e.V., initiated a strategic transition toward circularity across four secondary schools in Hamburg. The project was designed to tackle the environmental impact of single-use packaging in school canteens, specifically targeting the waste generated from serving yogurt, salads, and various beverages. The strategic vision centered on making school catering more sustainable by implementing a practical, high-volume reusable system that respects the specific operational realities of educational institutions. A primary driver for the project was the need to solve a common logistical problem: school canteens often operate without cash or credit cards, and since mobile phones are frequently restricted, traditional app-based deposit systems are impractical. By addressing these barriers, the partners aimed to establish a waste-free dining culture that could be seamlessly integrated into the students' daily lives.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved the rollout of reusable cups and bowls across four different sites, including Albert-Schweitzer Gymnasium and Stadtteilschule Oldenfelde (Scaling Out). To overcome the technical challenges of the school environment, the project utilized an innovative payment system developed by the provider Relevo. This system was adapted to allow students to pay and receive deposit refunds directly through their existing school payment cards, eliminating the need for smartphones or cash. To support this transition and ensure a shift in student behavior, the project team organized information stands during the initial implementation phase to educate and motivate the youth (Scaling Deep). Despite the successful technical integration, the journey revealed significant administrative hurdles, particularly regarding the complexity of coordinating and maintaining contact between a large group of stakeholders, including school councils, catering management, and project coordinators. The experience highlighted that while the infrastructure for reusables can be made highly efficient, the primary barrier remains the intensive communication required to keep all parties aligned. Moving forward, the focus remains on maintaining student participation levels to ensure the system achieves its full potential for packaging reduction and long-term sustainability.

Case 14: Expanding the use of reusable containers in the Copenhagen school meal programme

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Copenhagen, Denmark	Institutional

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The City of Copenhagen's EAT school meal programme serves a significant number of daily meals, creating a recurring flow of packaging that presents a major opportunity for reducing single-use waste. Recognizing this potential, the municipality initiated a transition toward circularity in 2025 to address the environmental footprint of its institutional catering. The strategic vision is to move beyond limited pilots and establish a reliable, municipal-wide model for reusable food containers. By testing the solution within the existing EAT infrastructure, the city aims to generate the operational evidence required to make reuse a permanent fixture in public procurement and school administration, ensuring that green transitions are integrated into the daily lives of pupils and staff.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation began at five selected schools, where meals are now served in reusable containers that are collected, washed, and recirculated through a centralized system. This process has already seen growth in its operational scope as the test expanded from younger pupils to include grades seven through nine (Scaling out). This expansion has allowed the project team to gain experience across different age groups and increase the volume of meals served without single-use alternatives. However, the journey has highlighted several critical barriers, particularly regarding the logistics of coordinating transport between individual schools and the central washing facility. Maintaining simple, efficient routines for both pupils and kitchen staff remains a challenge, as these new habits are essential for fostering a long-term culture of reuse (Scaling deep). While the project has successfully influenced internal organizational practices, it has not yet resulted in a full programme-wide requirement. The current results are primarily qualitative, focusing on improved operational routines and the identification of logistical bottlenecks, though the potential for quantitative impact is substantial as the model moves toward a broader municipal rollout. The next step involves evaluating the expanded test to determine the practical requirements for extending this circular model to all EAT schools in the city.

Case 15: Balancing fresh food and zero waste in Estonian school canteens

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Tallinn and Tartu, Estonia	Institutional

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The initiative addresses the environmental challenge of single-use packaging within the public catering sector, specifically focusing on school environments. Led by the catering provider Baltic Restaurants, the strategic vision is to transition from disposable service models to a more circular approach by significantly reducing packaging waste at the source. This effort is currently being implemented across several educational institutions, including Rahumäe and Mustamäe schools in Tallinn, as well as Raatuse and Variku schools in Tartu. By building on the successful outcomes of previous pilot projects in other local schools, the organization aims to create a scalable model for sustainable catering that aligns with broader environmental goals. The primary objective is to decrease the volume of waste generated daily while simultaneously fostering a culture of sustainability among students and educational staff.

THE JOURNEY

The process of expanding the packaging reduction model to new locations (Scaling Out) has provided critical insights into the operational realities of circular transitions. While the implementation has successfully led to a reduction in packaging usage and heightened environmental awareness, it has also encountered several practical barriers that offer valuable lessons for other operators. One significant challenge is the resistance encountered when changing established staff routines, highlighting that technical shifts must be accompanied by a focus on organizational culture (Scaling Deep). Furthermore, the project has faced logistical difficulties, such as the inconsistent return of reusable dishes and containers by users. Technical issues have also emerged, specifically regarding food quality, as certain products like sandwiches tend to dry out when not protected by traditional single-use wrapping. These experiences demonstrate that moving toward a circular model is an iterative process that requires balancing environmental ambitions with functional requirements and human behavior.

Case 16: Ditching single-use takeaway at the Anykščiai school canteen

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Institutional

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Anykščiai branch of the Aukštaitijos Vocational Education and Training Centre is preparing to launch a circular takeaway system in September 2026. The initiative targets the school canteen, which serves a large population of vocational students, including those living in on-site dormitories. The strategic vision is to significantly reduce the volume of single-use packaging generated by students who purchase takeaway meals. By offering a sustainable and affordable alternative that fits seamlessly into the students' daily routines, the institution aims to address the environmental impact of its catering services while fostering a culture of responsibility among its young users.

THE JOURNEY

The project involves implementing a deposit-return model where students pay a small refundable fee for reusable containers at the point of purchase. This model is a direct replication of the logic tested in earlier local pilots, adapted specifically for an institutional school setting (Scaling out). To ensure practical success, the canteen is matching container sizes to typical student portions and building the return process into the existing service flow. A key advantage identified is the stable, recurring nature of the user group, as students naturally return to the canteen, making the logistics of container recovery more efficient. However, the transition faces notable barriers, particularly regarding the initial procurement of inventory. Limited financial resources and uncertainty about securing the specific container sizes needed have created delays in the planning phase. To move forward, the center requires support in securing initial funding and practical guidance on managing the deposit system. The long-term goal is to move beyond a simple service change and embed these circular habits into the students' lifestyle, proving that institutional canteens can lead the way in waste reduction through practical, user-centered solutions.

Key lessons and future scaling in institutional settings

The institutional cases highlight three important lessons for replicating reusable packaging solutions in schools and public catering environments.

First, institutional settings offer favourable conditions for reuse. Recurring user groups and predictable meal routines can support collection and repeated use, provided that return arrangements are convenient and reliable.

Second, solutions must fit existing infrastructure and routines. Payment systems, washing capacity, storage and catering workflows vary between institutions, making local adaptation essential.

Third, organisational coordination is critical. Implementation requires clear responsibilities and cooperation between catering operators, institutional management, staff and users.

Looking ahead, established catering networks may offer opportunities to expand reuse across multiple institutions. Shared infrastructure and coordinated logistics could support this development where operationally feasible. Although the documented cases primarily illustrate Scaling Out and Scaling Deep, procurement requirements and institutional commitments may create opportunities for future Scaling Up.

Overall, the cases demonstrate that institutional reuse depends on practical solutions that fit everyday operations and can be sustained over time.

EVENT CASES

These event cases explore how reusable packaging solutions can be transferred and adapted to different types of events, from educational camps and local community activities to large festivals and public gatherings.

Events provide defined opportunities to introduce and test reuse systems, but their temporary nature creates specific operational challenges. Event size, duration, infrastructure and organisational capacity influence how reusable packaging can be distributed, collected and managed. Successful implementation therefore depends on adapting solutions to the characteristics of each event.

The cases involve three scaling dimensions:

- **Scaling Out:** Transferring and adapting reusable packaging solutions to new event formats, locations, organisers and participant groups.
- **Scaling Deep:** Encouraging changes in participant behaviour, staff routines and event practices through practical experiences with reuse.
- **Scaling Up:** Influencing event requirements, procurement practices and organisational standards that can support wider implementation.

Together, the cases illustrate how events can provide practical opportunities for replication and learning, while highlighting the challenge of turning temporary reuse experiences into more established practices.

Case 17: Running reusable cups across the Hamburg Triathlon finish line

LOCATION

Hamburg (Jungfernstieg), Germany

CATEGORY

Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS



SCALING OUT



SCALING UP



SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Deutsche Triathlon Union (DTU) faced a significant waste challenge during the SUZUKI WORLD TRIATHLON in Hamburg, an annual event attracting approximately 9,000 athletes and 250,000 spectators. Historically, the high-traffic post-finish area generated a substantial environmental footprint, requiring roughly 20,000 disposable paper cups to hydrate exhausted participants. Driven by the Hamburg Waste Management Act, which mandates the avoidance of single-use products where technically and economically feasible, the DTU sought to implement a circular solution. The strategic vision was to prove that a large-scale, high-pressure sports environment could transition to a reusable system without compromising the athlete experience or operational flow. This initiative aimed to align event operations with regional legal requirements while setting a new standard for waste reduction in the international sports sector.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved a first-time conversion of the post-finish zone from single-use to reusable cups, utilizing 20,000 units supplied by a regional provider who also handled local washing and logistics. Because athletes in this non-public area do not carry money, the system operated without a deposit, relying instead on a dedicated team of volunteers and clearly marked return bins at exits to encourage cup recovery. This shift resulted in the successful avoidance of 20,000 paper cups and has already led to the practice being expanded to other events within the organization's portfolio (Scaling Out). The project was further supported by regional legislation that creates a mandatory framework for waste avoidance.

However, the transition revealed several critical barriers that serve as important lessons for other operators. The total cost of logistics and washing remained higher than single-use options, and approximately 1,000 cups were lost due to the lack of a deposit system and signage that was not always clearly legible. Furthermore, international participants were often unfamiliar with the local return culture, and poorly designed waste bins—sometimes containing separate bags for waste and cups in the same container—led to athlete confusion and cross-contamination. These findings highlight that while the transition is technically possible, future success depends on improving communication initiatives and physical infrastructure to deeply embed these new habits into the sporting culture (Scaling Deep).



Case 18: Navigating weather, waste, and reusable cups at IRONMAN Hamburg

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg (Jungfernstieg), Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Ironman Germany faced a significant environmental challenge common to large-scale sporting events: the generation of immense amounts of waste from single-use paper and plastic cups. To address this, the organization implemented a reusable cup system at the Athletes' Garden during the IRONMAN Hamburg event in June 2026. This initiative was driven by a strategic commitment to waste reduction and the need to comply with the Hamburg Waste Management Act, which mandates the use of reusable alternatives where technically and economically feasible. By focusing on the post-race refreshment area for approximately 3,000 elite athletes, the vision was to demonstrate that circular solutions can function even in high-pressure, high-frequency environments where participants are physically exhausted.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved a partnership with a specialized service provider that supplied 9,000 reusable cups and ten large return bins. The setup featured a central distribution point and strategically placed collection stations supported by clear signage and volunteers to guide the athletes. This approach was inspired by previous experiences from other sporting and cultural events (Scaling Out). While the system proved its operational worth as a potential blueprint for future races across Germany, the project also highlighted critical barriers. The primary challenge was the significantly higher cost of reusable logistics and procurement compared to single-use alternatives. Furthermore, the impact was heavily influenced by external factors; due to cold and rainy weather, athletes spent less time in the garden than anticipated, resulting in only a few hundred cups being used instead of the forecasted 9,000. Additionally, despite the presence of volunteers and signage aimed at changing disposal habits (Scaling Deep), some contamination occurred as exhausted athletes occasionally placed ordinary waste in the reusable bins. Despite these hurdles, the event successfully saved the equivalent of one full general waste bin, providing valuable data on how to refine demand forecasting and behavioral guidance for future circular transitions.

Case 19: Finding the right rhythm for reusable tableware at the Amplifire hip-hop festival in Hamburg

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Amplifire Festival in Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg serves as a vibrant hub for urban hip-hop culture, attracting thousands of visitors to its open-air grounds. However, large-scale events traditionally face a significant environmental challenge: the massive accumulation of single-use food and beverage packaging. Effective waste sorting is nearly impossible in high-traffic visitor areas, leading to resource depletion and high disposal costs. To address this, the catering lead, Stereoliciouse GmbH, envisioned a festival environment where sustainability is the standard rather than the exception. By drawing inspiration from the large-scale reusable systems implemented during the UEFA EURO 2024 Fan Zone in Hamburg, the goal was to prove that even high-energy, fast-paced cultural events can operate without generating single-use waste. This strategic vision focused on conserving resources and setting new sustainability standards for the catering industry.



THE JOURNEY

The implementation focused on a comprehensive reusable system for all food items and hot beverages, deploying several thousand plates and bowls across the event for approximately 6,000 visitors. To manage the high traffic in the food court, a digital deposit refund system was introduced alongside a central return point. This setup was designed to reduce the administrative burden on individual stall operators while ensuring a smooth experience for guests. The results were significant, achieving a total elimination of single-use packaging on-site and maintaining a container loss rate of less than 10 percent. This successful replication of a proven model to a new event format (Scaling out) demonstrates how established solutions can be adapted to different contexts. However, the process also highlighted critical barriers, particularly regarding the financial costs and the complexity of logistics. Communication with stall operators proved challenging, as some were uncertain about ordering quantities and deadlines. Furthermore, limited on-site storage space remained a recurring constraint. Future iterations will require a clearer shared cost model and better guest communication to encourage the use of central return points over individual stalls to reduce queues. While a 100 percent reusable system is likely to become the norm for future editions, these logistical and communicative refinements are essential for long-term cultural change (Scaling deep).



Case 20: Scaling beyond cups to complete reusable catering at MS Dockville festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

MS Dockville is an annual music and art festival held in the industrial harbor district of Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg, attracting up to 60,000 visitors over a single weekend. With such a massive influx of people, the environmental impact of single-use food packaging becomes a critical issue, as effective waste sorting is virtually impossible in high-traffic festival areas. To address this, the catering provider Stereoliciouse GmbH sought to move beyond existing reusable cup systems for cold drinks and implement a 100 percent reusable solution for all food items and hot beverages. The strategic goal was to reduce waste and conserve resources by setting a new sustainability standard for large-scale cultural events. This initiative was directly inspired by the successful mandatory reusable systems used during the UEFA EURO 2024 Fan Zone in Hamburg, aiming to prove that large-scale circular solutions are viable even in complex, high-volume environments.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved deploying several tens of thousands of reusable plates and bowls across the festival grounds. To manage the intense flow of visitors in the food court, a digital deposit refund system was introduced alongside a central return point to alleviate the pressure on individual stall operators. The results were highly successful in terms of waste reduction, as the festival achieved a complete elimination of single-use food packaging on-site with a container loss rate of less than 10 percent. This expansion of a proven model to a larger, more complex event represents a significant growth in sustainable practices (Scaling out). However, the journey also revealed important logistical and financial barriers. High costs and limited on-site storage space remained persistent challenges. Furthermore, communication with stall operators regarding ordering deadlines and quantities needs improvement, as some operators were uncertain about the system's mechanics. There is also a need for better guest communication to encourage the use of central return points rather than returning items to food stalls, which would further reduce queues. Despite these hurdles, the success of the pilot suggests that a fully reusable system will likely become the permanent norm, driving a long-term shift in organizational culture and procurement standards (Scaling deep).



Case 21: Getting reusable wine glasses into full swing at Hamburg's Elbjazz festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Elbjazz is an annual two-day music festival that brings international jazz and funk to the iconic backdrop of Hamburg's port and harbor district, including unique venues like the Blohm+Voss shipyard. With up to 22,000 visitors, the event faces a significant environmental challenge in its highly frequented food court, where effective waste sorting is virtually impossible for guests. Stereoliciouse GmbH, the catering lead, recognized a strong need to reduce waste and conserve resources by moving beyond the existing reusable cup system for cold drinks. The strategic vision was to implement a 100 percent reusable system for all food items and hot beverages, including specialized wine glasses for the festival's wine lounge. This initiative was inspired by the successful pilot at the UEFA EURO 2024 Fan Zone in Hamburg, aiming to set new sustainability standards for the catering industry and prove that circular solutions can thrive in complex, high-traffic cultural settings.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved the deployment of tens of thousands of reusable plates and bowls across the festival site. To manage the high volume of transactions, a digital deposit refund system was introduced alongside a central return point, designed to alleviate the workload for individual stallholders. The results were highly successful, achieving a significant reduction in waste as no single-use food packaging was used on-site, while maintaining a container loss rate of less than 10 percent. This successful replication of a proven model in a new festival context (Scaling out) highlights the viability of large-scale reusable systems. However, the journey also identified critical barriers that provide important lessons for future events. Financial costs and limited on-site storage space remain persistent challenges. Furthermore, communication with stall operators proved to be a hurdle, as some were uncertain about the system's mechanics and the specific quantities of containers they needed to order. There is also a clear need for better guest communication to encourage the use of central return points rather than returning items to food stalls, which would reduce queues and pressure on operators. While a 100 percent reusable system is likely to become the permanent norm for Elbjazz, these logistical and communicative refinements are necessary to ensure a lasting cultural and operational shift (Scaling deep).



Case 22: Keeping up with a 32-hour nonstop rave using reusables at Hamburg's Habitat Festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Habitat Festival is an electronic music event held along the docks of Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg, famous for its immersive 32-hour nonstop rave. With up to 22,000 visitors, the high-intensity nature of the event creates a massive challenge for waste management, as effective waste sorting in the visitor areas is virtually impossible. Stereolicious GmbH, the catering lead, recognized that the highly frequented food court offered a significant opportunity for reducing waste and conserving resources. The strategic vision was to move beyond the existing reusable cup systems for cold drinks and implement a 100 percent reusable solution for all food items and hot beverages. Inspired by the mandatory reusable systems used during the UEFA EURO 2024 Fan Zone in Hamburg, the goal was to set a new sustainability standard for the electronic music scene and prove that circular economy principles can be maintained even during high-energy, long-duration events.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved deploying tens of thousands of reusable plates and bowls for all food items and hot beverages across the festival grounds. To handle the high traffic in the food court, a digital deposit refund system was integrated with a central return point to reduce the administrative burden on individual stallholders. The results were highly successful, achieving a total elimination of single-use food packaging on-site and maintaining a container loss rate of less than 10 percent. This successful expansion of a proven model to a new, high-volume festival environment (Scaling out) demonstrates the adaptability of large-scale reusable systems. However, the process also revealed significant barriers, particularly regarding the financial costs and the recurring constraint of limited on-site storage space. Communication with stall operators was a challenge, as some were unsure about the system's mechanics or the correct quantities to order. Additionally, while the central return point was functional, many guests continued to return items to individual stalls, causing unnecessary queues. Addressing these logistical and communicative gaps through clearer shared cost models and earlier operator engagement is essential for the system to become the permanent organizational norm (Scaling deep).

Case 23: Pairing old-school beats with new-school reusables at Hamburg's Ü30 hip-hop festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg, Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Old But Gold Ü30 Hip Hop Festival is an open-air event in Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg that celebrates classic rap and R&B for a mature audience. While the music looks back at the golden eras of the 90s and 2000s, the catering strategy is focused firmly on the future of the circular economy. With up to 10,000 visitors attending the two-day event, the festival faced a significant environmental challenge: the accumulation of single-use waste in the food court, where effective waste sorting is virtually impossible for guests. Stereoliciouse GmbH, the catering lead, aimed to address this by eliminating single-use food packaging entirely. Inspired by the successful mandatory reusable systems implemented during the UEFA EURO 2024 Fan Zone in Hamburg, the strategic vision was to set a new sustainability benchmark for the catering industry and prove that circular systems can be seamlessly integrated into specialized cultural events to conserve resources.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved deploying tens of thousands of reusable plates and bowls for all food items and hot beverages across the festival grounds. To manage the high traffic in the food court, a digital deposit refund system was introduced alongside a central return point, designed to streamline the process and reduce the administrative burden on individual stallholders. The results were highly successful, achieving a total elimination of single-use food packaging on-site and maintaining a container loss rate of less than 10 percent. This successful replication of a proven model in a new festival context (Scaling out) demonstrates the scalability of circular solutions. However, the journey also highlighted significant barriers that serve as important lessons for future events. Financial costs and limited on-site storage space remain persistent hurdles. Communication with stall operators was a key challenge, as some were uncertain about the logistics and the specific quantities of containers they needed to order. Furthermore, many guests continued to return items to individual stalls rather than the central return point, leading to unnecessary queues. Addressing these issues through earlier operator engagement and clearer guest communication is vital for making this system the permanent organizational standard (Scaling deep).

Case 24: Setting a circular game plan for local sports at a Berlin basketball club

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Berlin, Germany	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In September 2026, the organization Ökomarkt e.V. collaborated with a local basketball club in Berlin to transform their annual summer festival into a practical showcase for sustainability. The initiative was born from a desire to address the significant environmental footprint and waste typically generated during sports gatherings. Under the motto "Fair in the Game, Fair in Life," the partners aimed to integrate circular economy principles directly into the club's identity. The strategic vision was to move beyond theoretical discussions about conscious consumption and demonstrate a tangible solution that aligns athletic values with environmental responsibility. By targeting a setting where high-energy consumption and quick catering are the norms, the project sought to prove that sustainable transitions are possible without compromising the spirit of the event.

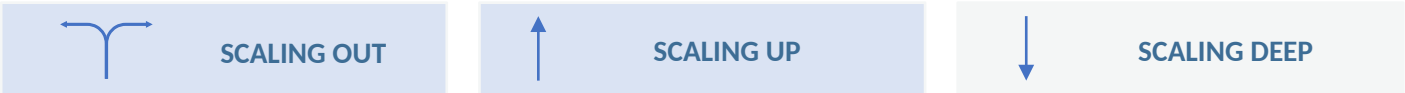
THE JOURNEY

The implementation focused on replacing single-use packaging with a professional reusable system for the festival's catering, which hosted approximately 500 visitors throughout the day. By utilizing reusable cups and bowls, the event successfully managed the distribution of up to 500 drinks and 100 meals without the usual accumulation of waste. This practical application reached a diverse group of 300 students and school staff, alongside 30 volunteers and coaches, effectively spreading the message of resource conservation across the local community (Scaling Out). A significant success was the immediate proof of concept; the event manager noted that demonstrating the system in action was far more impactful than mere discussion. However, the process also highlighted critical barriers, specifically the need for more robust financial support to stabilize the system for long-term use. While the festival was a successful pilot, the transition to making reusables a permanent fixture for regular game days requires sustainable funding models. Despite these financial hurdles, the experience has already begun to shift the internal culture of the club, fostering a deeper commitment to waste reduction in all future club operations (Scaling Deep). This case serves as a learning point for other municipalities, showing that while the logistical shift to reusables is achievable, securing long-term financial backing remains the primary challenge for scaling such initiatives across the sports sector.

Case 25: Shifting gears from one-off pilots to standard reusable catering at the Copenhagen Sprint

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Copenhagen, Denmark	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The Copenhagen Sprint 2026 represents a strategic effort by the City of Copenhagen and event organisers to address the environmental impact of large-scale public sporting events. These gatherings typically generate substantial quantities of single-use food and beverage packaging within a very short timeframe, creating a significant waste management challenge. The vision was to transition from an experimental phase into a more established, recurring operational model. By building directly on a previous pilot conducted in 2025, the organisers aimed to prove that circular solutions are not just one-off demonstrations but can be integrated into the standard delivery of major city events to reduce packaging waste and lower the overall carbon footprint.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved serving beverages in reusable packaging supported by a dedicated return infrastructure where visitors could drop off items for collection, washing, and recirculation. This process allowed the initiative to expand its reach (scaling out) by applying previous lessons to a new edition of the event. Success was found in the ability to refine logistics and vendor coordination based on earlier data, yet the journey also highlighted persistent barriers. Coordinating multiple food and beverage vendors remains a complex task, and ensuring high return rates requires constant attention to the visibility and placement of return points. Furthermore, the project faced challenges in maintaining efficient collection and washing logistics under the pressure of a high-traffic event. While exact quantitative data on carbon reduction and return rates are pending final event data, the qualitative success lies in the strengthened basis for future procurement requirements and the practical evidence provided for the city’s broader strategic goals (scaling up). Moving forward, the standardisation of packaging requirements and continued cooperation between operators and the municipality will be essential to overcome the remaining operational risks.



Case 26: Harvesting learnings from a decentralized reusable model at Finland's Lake Saimaa Harvest Festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Savonlinna region, Finland	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Saimaan Satojuhlat, or Lake Saimaa Harvest Festival, is a decentralized regional event in the Savonlinna area of Finland that connects visitors with local farms, small towns, and villages. While the festival celebrates local food and products, it has historically faced a significant environmental challenge due to the high volume of single-use packaging generated by food and beverage consumption. To address this, the Savonlinna Tourist Agency, with support from the Baltic Environmental Forum Germany, has initiated a strategic shift toward a more sustainable event model. The vision is to move away from the waste-intensive practices of the past and establish a comprehensive Green Event framework that prioritizes reuse and environmental responsibility across the entire region.

THE JOURNEY

The journey toward a greener festival involves adapting established sustainable practices to a complex, multi-site environment. Unlike a traditional event held in a single location, the Lake Saimaa Harvest Festival requires coordination across independent farms and local restaurants, where visitors purchase food for both immediate consumption and takeaway.

Introducing reuse across these different locations (Scaling Out) requires a flexible approach that considers different business models, visitor flows and practical options for returning reusable packaging. An initial pilot phase took place during the festival on 12–13 September 2026 to test reuse measures and gather practical experience. A key challenge is the festival's decentralized structure, which makes it difficult to coordinate reusable packaging and return systems across multiple sites.

The initiative is also encouraging local stakeholders to rethink how food and beverages are served at the festival (Scaling Deep). The experience from the 2026 pilot will inform the development of a more comprehensive Green Event approach for future editions, with the long-term aim of reducing single-use packaging and waste.



Case 27: Finding the right fit for reusable dishes at Lithuania's Purpurinis vakaras poetry festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In the municipality of Anykščiai, the restaurant Puntukas is leading a strategic shift toward circularity by rethinking how food is served at large-scale public gatherings. During the national spoken-word poetry festival "Purpurinis vakaras" in August 2026, the restaurant aimed to address the significant volume of single-use packaging waste typically generated at outdoor cultural events. Having already successfully tested a reusable dish system for daily takeaway services in a previous local pilot, the vision was to prove that these sustainable practices could be effectively transferred to a more complex, multi-day event set in a natural landscape. By moving beyond everyday service, the goal was to foster a lasting culture of sustainability among festival organizers, performers, and the public, demonstrating that green transitions are possible even in demanding logistical environments.

THE JOURNEY

The transition involved adapting a system designed for routine café takeaway to the high-pressure environment of a three-day national festival. By leveraging their existing experience and infrastructure, the restaurant served more than 150 meal portions in reusable dishes, reaching key stakeholders including festival organizers and sponsors. This expansion of the service to a new context (Scaling Out) showed that established circular models can grow without requiring entirely new vendor agreements. However, the process also revealed critical technical barriers that must be addressed to ensure broader applicability. A primary learning was that standard, uniform-size containers are not a universal solution. The effectiveness of the system is currently limited by packaging design; for example, soups require deeper, tightly sealing containers to prevent spills, while main courses need wider, shallower designs to preserve food quality and appearance. These logistical hurdles highlight that a one-size-fits-all approach can hinder the user experience. Despite these challenges, the initiative succeeded in reducing waste and shifting local mindsets (Scaling Deep). The next concrete step involves sanitizing the collected dishes for use at future arts and sporting events, with the ultimate ambition of establishing reusable systems as the standard practice for all public events across the district.



Case 28: Putting reusable dishes on the move at the Anykščiai Town Festival

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

During the Anykščiai Town Festival in July 2026, the municipality sought to address the persistent challenge of excessive waste generated during mass public gatherings. With approximately 5,000 participants attending the event, the strategic goal was to move away from single-use plastics and foster a local culture of sustainability. To achieve this, the municipality partnered with UAB "Dialvi," a mobile catering business, to test the feasibility of a circular dish system in a high-traffic, temporary setting. The vision was to demonstrate that even mobile vendors, who typically rely on disposable packaging, could successfully integrate into a municipal resource cycle and meet the increasing public expectation for sustainable event management.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved a formal agreement where the municipality provided the reusable inventory while the vendor handled the practical service. Throughout the festival, 450 reusable dishes were used, marking a significant transition from the small-scale, static environment of permanent cafés to a large-scale open-air event (Scaling Out). This shift required the creation of a dedicated collection infrastructure to ensure dishes remained within the city's resource cycle rather than being discarded. While the initiative successfully reduced plastic waste and established a permanent inventory for future municipal use (Scaling Up), it also highlighted significant logistical risks. Recovering all dishes in a large, moving crowd proved complex, and the need for dedicated storage and professional cleaning facilities remains a barrier to further growth. For future success, the municipality identified a need for clearer communication campaigns to help participants find return points and more precise data on the cost savings for mobile businesses to encourage wider participation among private operators.



Case 29: Going off-road with reusable dishes at Lithuania's World Motocross Championship

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai district, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

During the World Motocross Championship held at the Mickūnai track in August 2026, the municipality of Anykščiai aimed to tackle the significant environmental footprint of large-scale international sporting events. With athletes from 15 countries and thousands of spectators gathered in a natural setting, the strategic vision was to solve the problem of excessive waste generated during mass gatherings. By moving beyond local café settings, the municipality sought to foster a culture of sustainability within the context of professional sports, demonstrating that circular economy principles can be applied even in high-pressure, international environments where single-use packaging has traditionally been the norm.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved a collaborative agreement where the municipality supplied the reusable inventory and the food provider, UAB "Dialvi," managed the service during the two-day competition. Over the course of the event, 600 reusable dishes were used, successfully reaching a diverse international audience. This initiative represented a significant expansion of the circular model to a new, more complex sector (Scaling Out). However, the transition from static environments to a multi-day outdoor championship revealed several logistical barriers. The complexity of recovering dishes across a large track area with thousands of spectators remains a primary risk, alongside the urgent need for dedicated storage and professional cleaning facilities. Furthermore, the project highlighted that the initial cost of acquiring inventory is a barrier for private operators, suggesting that municipal financial or material support is essential to lower the entry threshold for vendors. Despite these challenges, the success of the pilot has led to plans for sanitizing and reusing the dishes for future sporting events, with the goal of establishing reusable systems as a standard practice (Scaling Up) and deeply embedding sustainable habits (Scaling Deep) within the regional event industry.



Case 30: Turning daily camp meals into a hands-on sustainability lesson in Anykščiai

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The initiative in Anykščiai was driven by a strategic ambition to eliminate single-use waste in organized youth activities while fostering a culture of environmental responsibility. During a seven-day summer camp titled "Įveikime kartu" in June 2026, Café Perino and the Antanas Baranauskas Primary School collaborated to address the environmental footprint of catering for twelve special education students. The core problem addressed was the high volume of disposable packaging typically associated with mobile catering services for schools and social institutions. By drawing inspiration from institutional packaging-free solutions in Tallinn, the partners aimed to demonstrate that sustainable catering is not only feasible but also serves as a powerful educational tool. The strategic vision was to move beyond mere waste reduction and integrate sustainability as a practical, daily lesson for children with special needs, proving that circular solutions can be adapted to even the most specialized social settings.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved a circular logistics model where Café Perino delivered all daily meals in reusable containers, effectively replacing all single-use dishware for the duration of the camp. To adapt the model to the specific needs of the students and the camp setting, the partners chose to bypass a traditional deposit system, focusing instead on the educational experience of receiving food in sustainable packaging (Scaling deep). This approach allowed for a seamless integration into the camp's routine, where containers were collected, washed, and reused the following day. The results were both quantitative and qualitative, as twelve students were served for a full week without generating packaging waste, while simultaneously gaining direct experience with circular economy principles. However, the process also highlighted significant barriers that other municipalities should consider. These included limited funding and the logistical challenge of ensuring the availability of reusable containers in the specific sizes or quantities required for specialized events. These constraints suggest that while the model is successful in a small-scale event setting (Scaling out), further growth will require more robust infrastructure and financial support. Moving forward, Café Perino intends to make reusable containers a standard offering for all future summer camp catering, signaling a commitment to long-term change in local catering practices.



Case 31: Programming circular catering habits at a 24-day robotics camp in Anykščiai

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Café Erdvė in Anykščiai identified a significant environmental challenge in the traditional catering model for summer programs, where single-use packaging is the standard. Inspired by institutional packaging-free solutions from Tallinn, the café aimed to implement a sustainable food delivery system for a 24-day Robotics Camp involving 176 children aged 7 to 12. The strategic goal was twofold: to eliminate the waste generated by nearly a month of continuous catering and to use the daily meal service as a platform for fostering environmental awareness among the younger generation. By addressing the problem of disposable waste at its source, the vision was to prove that large-scale, mobile catering can operate within a circular framework without compromising efficiency or food quality.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation focused on managing a continuous rotation of different participant groups over a four-week period. To ensure the system worked in practice, the café adapted the approach by selecting specific reusable dish sizes that could accommodate both soup and main courses effectively. Unlike traditional models, no deposit was collected, which simplified the logistics for the camp organizers and participants. This expansion of sustainable practices (Scaling out) resulted in 176 children being served two-course meals entirely without single-use packaging. While the project successfully demonstrated the viability of off-site reusable catering, it also revealed critical barriers. The primary risks identified were limited funding and the logistical difficulty of maintaining a sufficient supply of specialized containers for large, continuous groups. These challenges highlight a need for municipal or project-based financial support to help catering providers acquire the necessary inventory for longer events. Despite these hurdles, the success of the camp has led Café Erdvė to adopt reusable dishes as a permanent practice for all future student camp catering, moving the local industry toward a more sustainable standard (Scaling up).

Case 32: Preserving heritage and cutting waste at an Anykščiai museum camp

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The initiative at the A. Baranauskas and A. Vienuolis-Žukauskas Memorial Museum was born from a strategic desire to bridge the gap between theoretical sustainability knowledge and practical application. Following participation in professional training on reusable systems, museum staff proactively approached Café Juna to eliminate single-use waste during a five-day summer camp for students. The core problem addressed was the routine reliance on disposable packaging for off-site catering, which often contradicts the environmental values taught in educational programs. The strategic vision was to ensure that the camp’s focus on history, culture, and nature was reflected in its operational footprint. By addressing the environmental impact of daily lunch catering, the partners sought to demonstrate that circular economy principles are not just technical requirements but educational values that can be seamlessly integrated into youth activities. The goal was to prove that the reusable model, inspired by institutional solutions in Tallinn, could be successfully adapted to a high-demand, daily catering environment.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation was characterized by a strong mutual partnership between the cultural institution and the catering provider. Over the course of the five-day program, fifteen children were served lunch using reusable containers for all main courses, completely eliminating the need for disposable packaging. To ensure the system was accessible and easy to manage within the camp’s schedule, the partners decided to provide the containers without a deposit, focusing instead on the logistical flow of delivery and collection. This successful replication of a proven model in a new setting (Scaling out) highlighted the importance of stakeholder cooperation and prior training. However, the journey also identified significant barriers, particularly the need for dedicated funding to acquire a larger and more diverse inventory of reusable containers. These financial constraints remain a hurdle for expanding the scope of such initiatives. Despite this, the experience has led to a strategic commitment where the café and the museum intend to make reusable packaging the standard for all future student camp catering (Scaling up). Moving forward, secured municipal or project-based funding will be essential to accelerate this transition and support the acquisition of necessary equipment.

Case 33: Opening a new chapter for reusable catering at an Anykščiai library camp

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The initiative was spearheaded by the Anykščiai District Municipality Public Library following professional training on circular packaging solutions. The primary goal was to transition from theoretical knowledge to concrete action by implementing a reusable dishware system for the "AŠ – SUPERHEROJUS" summer camp. The strategic vision focused on addressing the environmental impact of disposable catering while simultaneously using the daily meal service as a pedagogical tool to model sustainable behavior for twenty participating children. By replacing single-use plastic containers and cutlery with durable alternatives, the library aimed to demonstrate that municipal institutions can independently drive the green transition and influence local catering standards through proactive procurement and collaboration. The project sought to prove that the reusable model, originally inspired by institutional solutions in Tallinn, could be successfully adapted to small-scale municipal events.

THE JOURNEY

Over a five-day period in July 2026, Café Mandri Puodai provided approximately 100 meals served entirely in reusable dishware. To ensure a low-friction experience for both the library and the participants, the partners opted for a trust-based model without a formal deposit system, which was made possible by the stable group of participants. This expansion of the reusable model (Scaling out) successfully eliminated all packaging waste for the duration of the camp and fostered a new working partnership between the public institution and the local business. However, the process also highlighted critical logistical barriers, such as the intensive coordination required for daily delivery and collection within a tight schedule. Furthermore, the library's total dependency on the café's inventory revealed a need for a shared municipal pool of reusable dishware to ensure long-term autonomy for public events. Despite these challenges, the positive reception from staff and families has solidified the library's intent to make reusable solutions a permanent requirement for future youth activities, while encouraging other municipal departments to adopt similar practices. Moving forward, continued training and municipal support for shared infrastructure will be essential to move the replication forward.

Case 34: Cross-district expansion with reusable catering for Lithuanian youth camps

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Užpaliai Manor, Utena district, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The initiative at Užpaliai Manor was driven by a strategic commitment to reduce the environmental footprint of outdoor youth activities while providing a tangible educational experience in sustainable consumption. Café Nela, based in Anykščiai, sought to replicate its successful circular catering model for the "Kūrybos sparnais" summer camp in the neighboring Utena district. The core problem addressed was the significant volume of single-use packaging waste typically generated during multi-day outdoor events. Inspired by institutional packaging-free solutions in Tallinn, the vision was to demonstrate that circular logistics are not only environmentally necessary but also highly efficient for catering providers. By integrating sustainability into the camp's daily routine, the partners aimed to turn mealtime into a real-life lesson in the circular economy, proving that waste-free solutions can be successfully exported across municipal borders to reach new audiences.

THE JOURNEY

During the five-day camp, eighteen children were served all meals using reusable containers and dishware, effectively eliminating the need for disposable packaging. The implementation was characterized by high operational convenience for the caterer, as the system was streamlined to function without a formal deposit collection. This geographic expansion of the model (Scaling out) achieved a significant reduction in waste and received strong support from participants who were introduced to the principles of sustainable consumption in practice. However, the replication also identified critical barriers that must be addressed for future scaling. The logistical challenge of transporting and collecting dishes across different districts remains a primary concern, alongside limitations regarding the availability of specific container sizes for varied menus. Furthermore, the lack of dedicated funding for acquiring inventory poses a risk to the long-term growth of such services. Despite these hurdles, the success of the event has led Café Nela to adopt reusable containers as a standard practice for future summer camps, reinforcing a shift toward more sustainable catering norms (Scaling deep). To further this transition, municipal support through partial funding for container acquisition will be essential for new providers entering the system.

Case 35: Turning training into action with circular youth camp catering in Anykščiai

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

In June 2026, the public institution VšĮ “Sveikatos oazė” in Anykščiai, Lithuania, identified an opportunity to align their operational practices with the environmental values taught in their youth programs. During their five-day summer camps for children aged 7 to 11, the organization sought to address the significant waste generated by takeaway catering. The strategic vision was to move beyond theoretical nature conservation by implementing a practical, circular solution in collaboration with their catering provider, the Aukštaitija Vocational Training Centre Canteen. By replacing disposable packaging with a reusable system, the organizers aimed to create a sustainable dining experience that serves as both a waste-reduction measure and a tangible educational tool for the next generation.

THE JOURNEY

The transition began when representatives from Sveikatos oazė attended professional training sessions and learned about successful institutional packaging-free models, specifically inspired by initiatives in Tallinn. Although the organization was not part of the original local pilot project, they chose to voluntarily adopt the model, demonstrating how knowledge transfer can lead to broader adoption (Scaling out). During the implementation phase, single-use packaging was completely eliminated for all main courses served to 19 children over the duration of the camp. This success was rooted in a mutual initiative between the event organizer and the catering provider, proving that small-scale events can effectively pilot circular shifts. However, the process also highlighted significant structural barriers. The primary challenge remains securing dedicated funding to purchase a larger inventory of reusable containers, which currently limits the ability to expand the practice. Moving forward, the goal is to embed these sustainable habits into the organizational culture (Scaling deep) by making reusable containers the standard for all future student camps. To achieve this, there is a clear need for closer cooperation between municipal authorities and private providers to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and ongoing training are supported by stable financial frameworks.



Case 36: Turning municipal reuse regulations into practice at Liepāja's Līvas Market

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Liepāja, Latvia	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The city of Liepāja has taken a decisive step toward a circular economy by moving beyond voluntary pilot projects to a mandatory policy framework. Following a successful trial at a youth festival in 2025, the municipality amended its binding regulations to require deposit-scheme cups for all food and beverage services at public events as of January 2026. The strategic vision behind this legislative shift is to institutionalize waste prevention, ensuring that every public gathering contributes to a significant reduction in single-use plastic. By embedding these requirements into city law, Liepāja aims to create a predictable and uniform standard for all event organizers and vendors, transforming the local event culture into one centered on sustainability and resource efficiency.

THE JOURNEY

The Līvas Market Festival in May 2026 served as the first official test of these new regulations. While the policy change represents a significant institutional advancement (Scaling up), the practical application at a large-scale public market (Scaling out) revealed critical operational gaps. One notable success was the engagement of a small local business to provide the reusable tableware, which helped minimize transportation costs compared to using larger providers from the capital. However, the transition faced notable pushback from merchants and highlighted a lack of specific procedural guidelines within the current legal framework. This absence of clear instructions left organizers struggling to manage the system effectively, leading to concerns about whether the cups were actually being reused or if the initiative risked becoming an instance of greenwashing. The experience has shown that while legislation is a powerful tool for growth, it must be supported by practical manuals and municipal funding to be successful. Moving forward, the city plans to develop comprehensive guidelines and seek dedicated financial support to ensure that the transition toward a culture of reuse (Scaling deep) is both credible and manageable for all stakeholders involved.



Case 37: Coordinating a unified deposit return network for 130,000 visitors in Riga

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Riga, Latvia	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

Riga sought to address the logistical failures often associated with decentralized reuse systems, where inconsistent procedures and long queues at individual vendor stalls diminish the visitor experience. Inspired by successful initiatives in the municipality of Liepāja, the Riga Municipality aimed to implement a centralized deposit return system for the 2026 City Birthday Celebration—a massive city-wide event attracting approximately 130,000 visitors across multiple locations. The strategic vision was to move away from the burden of individual stall management toward a unified "return anywhere" model. By establishing a coordinated infrastructure, the city intended to improve operational efficiency for vendors and provide a seamless, user-friendly experience for the public, thereby setting a new sustainability standard for large-scale urban events.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation process began with the formation of a cross-departmental working group tasked with developing technical specifications and conducting market research to institutionalize circular procurement. However, the journey highlighted significant challenges within the current market and administrative framework. The formal procurement procedure for a centralized operator ultimately concluded without a successful result, primarily due to complexities regarding financial risk-sharing and a lack of experience among market participants in handling such high-volume, multi-location logistics. Despite this setback, the preparatory work served as a vital catalyst for growth (Scaling out). The market consultations and stakeholder engagement encouraged a partial replication of the model; two major festival venues successfully implemented a centralized approach through direct agreements between operators and vendors. This allowed thousands of visitors to return cups at any participating stall, proving the feasibility of the concept even without a formal third-party operator. These lessons are now informing future policy goals and event planning, as the city explores more flexible cooperation mechanisms to ensure the transition toward a culture of reuse is supported by agile and realistic implementation models.

Case 38: Building community readiness for circular dining in Poland's rural tourism sector

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Wydmyny, Masuria Region, Poland	Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Masuria region in Poland is a prominent tourist destination that faces significant environmental pressure during the peak season. The Association of Pro-Social Initiatives "Kombajn Kulturalny" recognized the urgent need to address the volume of waste generated by their cultural events and music festivals. Their vision is to transition from a reliance on single-use plastics to a circular model that aligns with the upcoming Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). This strategic shift is not only about compliance but also about preserving the natural beauty of the Masurian landscape. By targeting both large-scale outdoor concerts and the hospitality sector, the organization aims to create a holistic approach to sustainability that serves as a blueprint for other rural, tourism-dependent areas.

THE JOURNEY

The process began with the adoption of specialized toolkits, including a practical guide on reusability and a comprehensive green events checklist. These materials provided the necessary framework to evaluate current practices and explore rental systems for reusable dishes. A key success in this early phase has been the involvement of a local hotel manager who has already begun integrating these guidelines into year-round hospitality operations, effectively expanding the reach of circular practices (Scaling Out). However, the transition is met with notable challenges. The organization operates in a conservative social environment where residents and event-goers often show resistance to new waste separation protocols. Furthermore, the financial burden of implementing reusable systems at non-ticketed, open-access events remains a significant barrier. To address these hurdles, the organization is focusing on long-term cultural change and education to shift local mindsets (Scaling Deep). While full implementation is planned for the 2027 summer season, the current planning phase has already fostered high levels of trust and knowledge sharing between non-governmental actors and sustainability experts. The journey highlights that while technical solutions like reusable dish rentals are available, the path to circularity in rural contexts requires a gradual, well-funded approach that balances environmental ambition with community readiness.

Case 39: Turning abstract event policies into practical reusable checklists for Swedish NGOs

LOCATION

Sweden

CATEGORY

Event

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The organization CCB in Sweden recognized that their internal environmental routines required a significant update to align with modern sustainability goals. The primary challenge identified was that while their existing guidelines for event management touched upon the concept of reuse, they lacked a concrete mechanism or system for actual implementation on the ground. The strategic vision was to bridge the gap between high-level policy and daily practice by integrating proven circular food delivery solutions into their organizational framework. By focusing on the specific needs of their network and member organizations, they aimed to ensure that every event, regardless of size, contributes to a broader strategic goal of reducing waste and improving resource efficiency.

THE JOURNEY

The process began with a rigorous evaluation of current guidelines against international best practices for circular food systems at events. A key learning during this phase was that many existing solutions are designed for large-scale municipal events and do not always apply directly to smaller organizations that have less control over venues, suppliers, and infrastructure. To address this, the project manager adapted a checklist from a partner organization to better fit the specific context and scale of their own operations (Scaling Out). This new approach focuses on assessing feasibility before an event, strengthening planning responsibilities, and clarifying practical hygiene and washing arrangements. Although the adoption of this checklist is expected to influence the culture and behavior of all member organizations, the journey has faced institutional barriers. Updating official policies and routines is a slow process that requires a formal vote at general meetings held only twice a year, which has delayed the formal implementation and the creation of new procurement criteria. While the project is still in the planning phase and has not yet achieved quantitative CO2 reductions, it highlights the critical importance of adapting theoretical models to local realities and the necessity of navigating institutional timelines to achieve lasting change.

Key lessons and future scaling in event settings

The event cases highlight three important lessons for introducing reusable packaging at festivals, public gatherings and other temporary events.

First, events provide practical opportunities to test reuse. Defined event periods and concentrated participant groups make it possible to introduce reusable systems and gain experience with their operation.

Second, logistics must match the event setting. Distribution, collection, washing and storage arrangements need to reflect event size, duration, available infrastructure and organisational capacity.

Third, implementation depends on organisers, staff and participants. Clear responsibilities, convenient return points and effective communication are essential for encouraging participation and managing reusable packaging during events.

Looking ahead, repeated events and established organiser networks may offer opportunities to transfer successful approaches to new settings. Common event requirements and procurement practices could support wider adoption, while positive participant experiences may help normalise reuse beyond individual events.

Overall, the cases show that events can support Scaling Out through practical replication, but lasting progress depends on turning temporary implementation into recurring organisational practices and broader institutional support.

FOOD TAKEAWAY CASES

These food takeaway cases explore how reusable packaging solutions can be transferred and adapted to different food-to-go environments, including weekly markets, cafés, restaurants, workplaces and tourism settings. Unlike more controlled institutional environments, takeaway systems often involve diverse customer groups, unpredictable purchasing patterns and packaging that leaves the point of sale. This makes convenience, return arrangements and business commitment particularly important. The cases illustrate how operational simplicity, staff engagement and customer participation influence the adoption of reuse.

The cases involve three scaling dimensions:

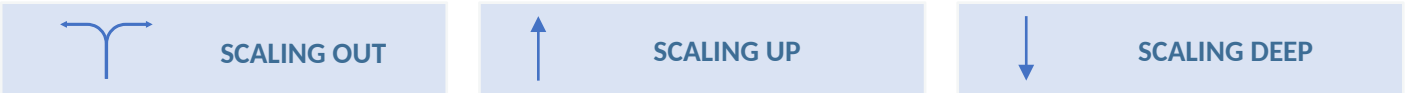
- **Scaling Out:** Transferring and adapting reusable packaging solutions to new businesses, locations and customer groups.
- **Scaling Deep:** Supporting changes in customer habits, staff routines and everyday business practices.
- **Scaling Up:** Influencing municipal requirements, commercial agreements and institutional frameworks that can support wider implementation.

Together, the cases highlight that successful takeaway replication depends not only on making reusable packaging available, but also on creating systems that are practical for businesses and convenient for consumers.

Case 40: Designing accessible reuse systems for a diverse weekly market in Hamburg-Billstedt

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg-Billstedt, Germany	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The Billstedt weekly market in Hamburg serves as a vital social and economic hub for a diverse, lower-income neighborhood where approximately 64.6% of residents have a migration background. The strategic vision for this initiative is to transform the market into a model of sustainability that does not compromise economic viability or social accessibility. Led by the Hamburg-Mitte District Office in cooperation with the Baltic Environmental Forum Germany, the project addresses the challenge of integrating green transitions into a community characterized by high price sensitivity. The goal is to stabilize the local economy and enhance public space by making the market more attractive and sustainable. By positioning sustainability not as an additional cost burden but as an integral component of a functional, future-oriented market, the project seeks to ensure long-term local supply and social participation for all inhabitants.

THE JOURNEY

The process was rooted in a collaborative approach, beginning with a materiality analysis to identify key sustainability topics relevant to the specific local context. This was followed by a co-creation phase involving a broad range of stakeholders, including market vendors, public administration, and civil society organizations. Through workshops and qualitative interviews, the partners developed a guiding vision and a catalogue of measures focusing on cleanliness, waste prevention, and the introduction of reusable systems. This strategic framework aims to influence future urban development policy (Scaling Up) while fostering a cultural shift toward sustainable practices within the diverse vendor community (Scaling Deep). The project also aims to create a transferable model that can be replicated in comparable urban markets (Scaling Out). However, the journey faces significant practical barriers. Ongoing large-scale redevelopment of the market square means that full implementation is delayed until at least 2027. Furthermore, bureaucratic hurdles and the need for continuous financial resources remain challenges. Success currently rests on the distribution of responsibility between the district and vendors, using starter kits and voluntary initiatives to build momentum while navigating the complexities of a lower-income urban environment.



Case 41: Bringing reusable and customer containers to weekly food markets in Cuxhaven

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Cuxhaven, Germany	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In Cuxhaven, Germany, the municipality is spearheading an initiative to address the environmental impact of takeaway food at local weekly markets. The primary challenge is the prevalence of single-use plastic packaging, which local food retailers are eager to phase out in favor of more sustainable alternatives. By drawing inspiration from established pilot models for reusable containers, the vision is to implement a system where multiple-use containers or customers' own containers become the standard. This strategic shift is motivated by a clear goal to reduce plastic waste and foster a circular economy within the local food sector, ensuring that the convenience of takeaway does not come at the cost of the environment.

THE JOURNEY

The process began by exploring how to adapt existing reusable container models to the specific requirements of market retailers. A key part of this adaptation involves identifying the correct types of containers that suit various food products while maintaining quality. As the project moves toward expanding these practices to new vendors (Scaling Out), several significant barriers have emerged. The replication effort requires substantial communication and is often hindered by time constraints. Furthermore, retailers have raised concerns regarding hygiene standards and the financial pressure of rising costs versus potential income loss. While the project is still in the exploration phase, the anticipated impact is a measurable decrease in single-use plastic packaging. These early stages have highlighted that successful implementation relies on addressing the practical and economic fears of small businesses through clear dialogue and tailored solutions.

Case 42: Scaling reusable takeaway from pilot to company-wide operations across Hamburg's weekly markets

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg and surrounding areas, Germany	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

The initiative in Hamburg, led by the food vendor SURI Signature, addresses the environmental burden of single-use takeaway packaging at traditional weekly markets. While pilot projects often demonstrate potential in isolation, the strategic goal of this replication was to move beyond temporary testing and integrate circularity into the core business model. The vision focused on establishing a practical and economically viable reusable alternative that feels like a normal purchasing option for customers rather than an exceptional activity. By replacing single-use plastic with high-quality stainless-steel containers, the project aims to significantly reduce waste across a wide network of mobile sales points, proving that sustainability can be seamlessly woven into fast-paced retail environments.

THE JOURNEY

The transition involved expanding the reusable system from two initial pilot sites to more than eleven weekly markets, supported by five mobile sales vehicles (Scaling out). This expansion required a complete overhaul of internal operations, including production, logistics, and cleaning processes to ensure a steady circulation of containers. Technical adaptations were crucial, such as introducing new point-of-sale systems to handle tare weights and refining the container design with tempered safety-glass lids based on direct user feedback. However, the journey also highlighted significant barriers, particularly the high upfront investment in equipment and the logistical complexity of managing returns and disinfection across multiple locations. A major challenge was the need to change established routines among both staff and customers (Scaling deep), as reusable systems require more active communication and training compared to conventional packaging, especially during busy market hours. Despite these hurdles, the project has successfully increased staff capacity and customer awareness, creating a robust operational model that now serves as a practical reference for onboarding external vendors.

Case 43: Integrating reusable steel containers into daily shopping mall counter sales in Flensburg

LOCATION

Flensburg, Germany

CATEGORY

Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS



SCALING OUT



SCALING UP



SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Die Feine, a stationary delicatessen retailer located in the Förde Park shopping center in Flensburg, recognized the need to address the environmental impact of single-use packaging used for products like olives and antipasti. The strategic vision was to transition toward a more sustainable business model by replacing disposable containers with a circular system. By adopting a proven concept originally developed for weekly markets, the retailer aimed to reduce recurring packaging costs and strengthen customer loyalty. The goal was to prove that reusable solutions are not limited to mobile market stands but can be successfully integrated into permanent retail environments within a busy shopping mall, meeting the increasing consumer demand for sustainable purchasing options.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation process involved a structured onboarding and training of staff to ensure the reusable system became a natural part of the daily counter operations. The model combines two approaches: providing a starter stock of 150 stainless-steel containers in five different sizes and actively encouraging customers to bring their own containers (Scaling out). Quantitatively, the initiative targets a 10% increase in the use of reusable packaging to measurably reduce waste. However, the transition has highlighted that the main challenge is moving from passive availability to active engagement. Success depends on employees consistently informing customers about the reusable alternatives, which requires a significant shift in established sales routines and continuous communication, particularly during busy periods (Scaling deep). While there were initial concerns regarding practical handling and customer acceptance, the project has demonstrated that tailored training and visible communication materials are essential for embedding these new operational standards into a stationary retail setting.



Case 44: Learning from resistance to reusable takeaway at Hamburg's Goldbekmarkt

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Goldbekmarkt, Hamburg, Germany	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The initiative at Goldbekmarkt in Hamburg aimed to transition an independent food vendor, Gastroviki, from single-use takeaway containers to a circular packaging system. Selling freshly heated Pelmeni, the vendor represented a high-potential case for waste reduction due to the volume of disposable packaging generated during market hours. The strategic vision was to demonstrate that reusable solutions could be seamlessly integrated into the fast-paced environment of a mobile food stall. By offering a variety of models—ranging from high-quality stainless-steel containers to established pooling systems and "bring your own" options—the goal was to find a practical, low-barrier entry point for small-scale operators to contribute to the city's green transition.

THE JOURNEY

The replication process was characterized by intensive individual support, including five consultation discussions and four personal on-site visits. To ensure the concept was fully understood, a dedicated multilingual presentation was developed in German, English, and Russian, and physical container samples were provided for practical assessment. Despite this extensive preparation, the vendor ultimately decided not to implement a reusable solution, choosing instead to continue with single-use packaging. This unsuccessful attempt to replicate an established circular model (Scaling Out) serves as a critical learning point, highlighting that even when suitable technical solutions and comprehensive support are provided, the primary barrier remains the willingness of individual operators to change established routines. The vendor increasingly perceived the transition as too complicated for daily operations and eventually stopped engaging in the process. For other municipalities and operators, this experience underscores that operational simplicity alone does not guarantee adoption if the vendor does not perceive a sufficient individual benefit or is resistant to changing their business model. It provides valuable evidence that successful scaling requires identifying operational commitment and a clear motivation for change early in the onboarding process.



Case 45: Activating counter staff to establish permanent reusable takeaway in Hamburg-Sasel

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Hamburg-Sasel, Germany	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

A+M Mittelmeer-Spezialitäten, an independent Mediterranean food retailer in Hamburg-Sasel, recognized the environmental and economic burden of single-use takeaway packaging. In summer 2026, the management sought to transition toward a more sustainable business model by adopting a circular packaging system for their counter-based delicatessen products. The strategic vision was to offer customers a practical alternative to disposable containers, thereby reducing waste while simultaneously building stronger customer loyalty through a sustainable service offer. By moving away from a continuous dependency on single-use materials, the retailer aimed to achieve long-term cost savings and align their operations with the growing consumer demand for environmentally conscious shopping experiences.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation process involved an intensive onboarding phase that included six consultation discussions and two personal on-site visits to ensure the system fit the specific needs of a counter-based sales environment. This expansion of the reusable model to an external partner (Scaling out) was supported by two dedicated staff training sessions held in August and September 2026. The system officially went live on September 21, 2026, integrating stainless-steel containers into regular sales operations. While the initial response has been positive, the journey revealed that the primary challenge lies in the human element of the transition. Successful implementation required a significant shift in established sales routines, as employees must actively inform and encourage customers to choose the reusable option (Scaling deep). The retailer found that without continuous communication at the point of sale, the system risks being overlooked. Despite these operational hurdles, the project has successfully transformed from a temporary demonstration into a permanent operational change, providing a scalable reference for other independent food retailers looking to reduce their environmental footprint.



Case 46: Bringing reusable steel containers to fresh food and lunch counters in Hamburg-Nord

LOCATION

Hamburg-Nord, Germany

CATEGORY

Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS



SCALING OUT



SCALING UP



SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

VITA BENK, a fruit and vegetable retailer in Hamburg-Nord, recognized the need to modernize its operations by addressing the environmental impact of its lunch service and fresh-food counter. The strategic vision was to reduce the business's dependency on single-use takeaway packaging, which represented both an environmental burden and a recurring financial cost. By transitioning to a circular model, the retailer aimed to strengthen customer loyalty and position itself as a responsible local actor. The core objective was to prove that sustainable packaging solutions, originally designed for mobile weekly markets, could be effectively integrated into a permanent retail environment to meet the growing demand for waste-free shopping.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved adopting a system of high-quality stainless-steel containers in five different sizes to accommodate various food portions, ranging from small snacks to large meals. To ensure a smooth transition, four employees underwent specialized on-site training focused on integrating the new system into daily sales routines. This expansion of the model into a stationary retail context (Scaling out) was supported by adapted communication materials that both offered the new containers and encouraged customers to bring their own. Quantitatively, the initiative targets a 10-15% increase in the share of reusable packaging, directly replacing disposable alternatives. However, the process revealed that the primary barrier is not technical but communicative. The success of the system relies heavily on staff actively informing customers about the reusable option during busy periods, which requires a shift in established service habits (Scaling deep). While initial concerns regarding customer acceptance and additional workload were present, the project demonstrates that continuous support and clear point-of-sale marketing are essential for making reusables a standard part of the customer experience.

Case 47: Expanding the urban reuse system across municipal borders

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Frederiksberg, Denmark	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

SCALING OUT

SCALING UP

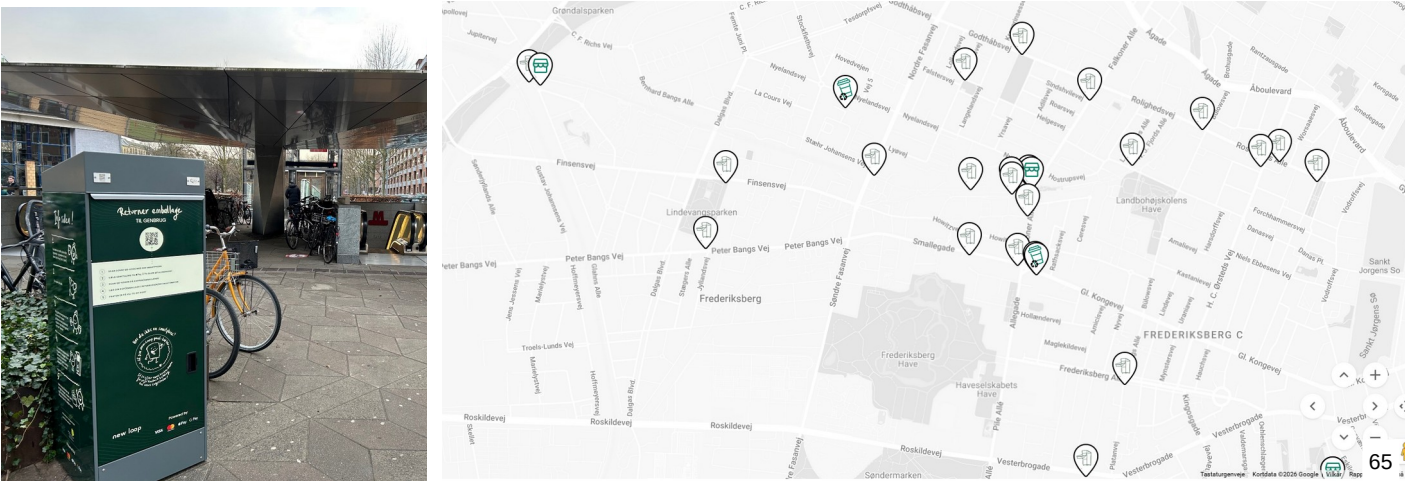
SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Frederiksberg Municipality is taking a decisive step to address the environmental impact of takeaway packaging, a key action under its Climate Action Plan 2025. Currently, the rapid growth in takeaway consumption leads to increasing volumes of waste, litter in public spaces, and an inefficient use of resources, as most single-use packaging is used for only a few minutes before being incinerated. To counter this, Frederiksberg has replicated and extended the existing urban reuse system from the neighboring City of Copenhagen. By aligning infrastructure and operators, the two largest municipalities in the capital region have created a coherent, cross-border deposit-return scheme. This ensures that circularity becomes a seamless part of urban mobility, allowing citizens to borrow and return packaging across municipal boundaries.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation began with the deployment of 20 return stations at strategic hubs, such as metro stations and high-traffic takeaway zones. This geographic expansion and replication of a proven model (Scaling Out) effectively doubles the reach of the system for the user. To ensure long-term stability, the municipality has allocated DKK 1 million in the budget through 2029 and is working to integrate reuse requirements into its upcoming waste management strategy and procurement policies (Scaling Up). However, the journey has also highlighted significant barriers. While the infrastructure is ready—and has already enabled five major brands like Starbucks and Original Coffee to join the system independently—no businesses have yet signed up for the specific municipal support scheme. Early data shows that only 60 cups were returned in the first three months, reflecting a core challenge: many businesses fear that a deposit system is perceived as inconvenient by customers, and consumer demand remains too low to drive a voluntary shift. To address this, the municipality is focusing on shifting cultural norms and mindsets (Scaling Deep) through digital awareness campaigns. These efforts aim to prove that while the technical infrastructure is a prerequisite, the ultimate success of a circular system depends on changing the public's mindset and stimulating demand for sustainable alternatives.



Case 48: Circulating reusable cups at Copenhagen Zoo

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Copenhagen/Frederiksberg, Denmark	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

**SCALING OUT**

**SCALING UP**

**SCALING DEEP**

THE VISION

Copenhagen Zoo, one of Denmark’s most visited attractions, has introduced a reusable takeaway system to drastically reduce the waste generated by its food and beverage outlets. This initiative is a direct response to the Zoo’s core mission of nature preservation, aiming to minimize resource consumption and prevent single-use packaging from ending up as waste. By replicating the principles and infrastructure tested in the City of Copenhagen’s urban pilots, the Zoo has transformed its semi-closed environment into a large-scale "living lab" for circularity. The goal is to prove that high-volume visitor sites can successfully transition away from single-use culture by integrating reuse into the guest experience.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation has seen immediate and massive growth, with more than 30,000 reusable cups put into circulation in the first month alone. This represents a significant expansion of the urban reuse model into a new, controlled context (Scaling Out). To make the system fit the Zoo’s unique environment, the approach was adapted to allow visitors to donate their packaging deposit to the Zoo’s conservation projects—a strategic alignment that integrates the circular system into the institution’s core values and long-term goals.

The project has provided critical insights into the logistics of a semi-closed system, where food outlets, return stations, and visitor flows are managed by a single organization. While the high volume of users demonstrates the system's potential, the journey has also revealed operational challenges, such as ensuring high return rates and integrating the collection and washing of packaging into existing workflows. By exposing thousands of daily visitors to a functional deposit-return scheme, the Zoo is actively driving a shift in public perception and behavior (Scaling Deep). The next steps involve continuous monitoring of user behavior and optimizing the return infrastructure to ensure that the transition to reuse remains both environmentally impactful and operationally sustainable.



Case 49: Scaling reuse in a global chain

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Copenhagen, Denmark	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS



THE VISION

Joe & The Juice, a major international food-service chain, has joined the Copenhagen reusable takeaway ecosystem to address its significant consumption of single-use packaging. As a high-volume business, the company recognizes that its dependence on conventional single-use cups is increasingly at odds with environmental goals, market trends, and upcoming regulations. By building on the infrastructure and knowledge generated through the City of Copenhagen’s urban pilots, Joe & The Juice aims to prove that reusable packaging can be integrated into the fast-paced, standardized operations of a large commercial chain. The vision is to move beyond limited testing and make reuse a viable, standard option for customers on the move.

THE JOURNEY

The project involves a coordinated rollout across multiple locations in Copenhagen, where customers can choose reusable cups that are later collected, washed, and recirculated via the operator New Loop. This expansion from a single-site pilot to a multi-location rollout is a clear example of growth and replication (Scaling Out). A critical part of the journey has been adapting the reuse model to fit high-speed, standardized workflows; for a chain like Joe & The Juice, the system must be simple for employees and must not significantly increase service time or operational complexity. This focus on institutionalizing the process within corporate standards is key to long-term viability (Scaling Up).

However, the transition is not without its challenges. The journey has highlighted that the success of the system depends on a dense and convenient return infrastructure—if return stations are too far apart, the "convenience gap" between single-use and reuse remains too wide. Furthermore, the project identifies customer uptake and staff routines as key barriers. To overcome these, the focus is on driving a shift in habits and awareness (Scaling Deep) by optimizing store routines and increasing customer engagement. By integrating reuse into the standard customer experience of a major brand, the project seeks to change the cultural norms of takeaway consumption, demonstrating that even high-volume, fast-turnover businesses can play a central role in a circular economy.

Case 50: Simplifying reusable takeaway with a bring-or-buy lunch model in Tallinn

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Tallinn, Estonia	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The initiative at the Audentes lunch restaurant in Tallinn represents a focused effort to tackle the environmental impact of disposable food containers in a high-traffic catering environment. Led by Baltic Restaurants Estonia AS, the project was launched in early 2026 with the clear strategic goal of completely eliminating single-use packaging for take-away meals. The vision is rooted in the necessity of moving away from a linear model toward a circular system where the responsibility for packaging is shared between the operator and the consumer. By targeting a specific institutional setting like Audentes, the project aims to demonstrate that professional catering services can operate effectively without relying on the convenience of disposables, thereby addressing the growing problem of waste in the urban food sector.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation process involved replicating a previous pilot from a ministry building cafe to this new location (Scaling Out). A key learning from the earlier phase was the decision to simplify the service by removing a third-party deposit system, which had proven unpopular with users, and instead focusing on two primary options: customers bringing their own containers or purchasing a high-quality reusable box directly at the restaurant for 3.90 Euro. This adaptation highlights the importance of tailoring circular solutions to the specific preferences and behaviors of the target audience. However, the transition has not been without its challenges, as the restaurant encountered initial negative reactions from some customers accustomed to the convenience of disposables. This resistance underscores that technical changes must be supported by a shift in consumer culture and mindset (Scaling Deep). While quantitative data on the exact amount of packaging saved is still being collected, the project has already succeeded in establishing a new operational standard. The next phase involves monitoring the long-term viability of the model to ensure that the removal of disposables remains a permanent and accepted part of the daily lunch routine.



Case 51: Adapting reusable containers for direct farm sales in Finland's lake region

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Veikkolan Tuumaaja Taito, Savonlinna region, Finland	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

SCALING OUT

SCALING UP

SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Veikkolan Tuumaaja Taito, a local farm in the Savonlinna region, is taking a proactive step toward reducing the environmental footprint of local food production. Traditionally, the sale of farm products like salads and honeycomb has relied on single-use packaging, contributing to avoidable waste. To address this, the farm is collaborating with the Baltic Environmental Forum Germany to implement a strategic shift toward circularity. The vision is to demonstrate that reusable packaging systems, often associated with urban centers, can be successfully integrated into rural, direct-to-consumer sales models. By establishing a permanent reusable alternative, the farm aims to lead by example, showing how small-scale producers can contribute to broader sustainability goals.

THE JOURNEY

The process involves adapting a reusable container system originally tested in an urban market in Hamburg to a decentralized rural setting. This geographical expansion of a proven concept (Scaling Out) focuses on the use of specialized reusable containers for specific farm products, supported by a deposit-and-return model. A critical test of this system is planned for the Saimaan Satojuhlat festival in September 2026, where the farm will also introduce cotton bags and reusable vegetable nets. This pilot aims to shift local consumer habits and establish new norms for how food is purchased and returned (Scaling Deep).

However, the journey is not without its challenges. The decentralized nature of the regional festival makes the coordination of container returns complex, and there is a significant reliance on customer understanding and participation in the deposit system. While quantitative results regarding the number of containers diverted from landfills will be documented following the 2026 pilot, the initial phase has already highlighted the importance of direct customer relationships in making reuse systems viable. The long-term success of the initiative depends on overcoming these logistical barriers and ensuring that the positive customer experience translates into a permanent change in local business practices.



Case 52: Meeting growing customer demand for reusable takeaway

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Anykščiai, Lithuania	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

Caffe Pasagėlė, a local eatery in Anykščiai, Lithuania, is preparing to transition from a pilot phase to a permanent, expanded circular model by January 2027. Having previously tested reusable dishes, the cafe’s management recognized a clear opportunity to address the persistent problem of single-use packaging waste in the takeaway sector. The strategic vision is driven by a desire to improve and enlarge the current deposit system, moving beyond a trial to a fully integrated business practice. This initiative is strongly supported by a growing local demand, as customers are increasingly choosing reusable options intentionally, reflecting a shared commitment to nature conservation and waste reduction within the community.

THE JOURNEY

The transition focuses on expanding the reach and volume of the existing reusable system to serve more customers and reduce more waste (Scaling out). A critical learning from the initial phase was the need for functional adaptation; the cafe found that standard reusable containers were not always optimal for their specific menu. To ensure a successful expansion, the next step involves modifying the size and type of dishes to better suit the food produced. While the initiative demonstrates clear growth, it faces significant practical barriers, particularly limited financial resources and uncertainty regarding the supply of containers in the required dimensions. Despite these challenges, the cafe aims to foster a deeper cultural change (Scaling deep) by documenting their self-driven adoption as a peer-to-peer success story. By sharing their experiences, they hope to demonstrate to other local businesses that shifting to circular operations is achievable through organizational initiative, even when external funding or institutional pressure is not yet fully established.

Case 53: Navigating digital and voluntary hurdles in Liepāja's coastal takeaway trials

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Liepāja, Latvia	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In the summer of 2026, five beach cafes in Liepāja—The Mermaid, 7.līnija, Red Sun Buffet, Cukurfabrik, and Beach Cafe—embarked on an initiative to eliminate single-use plastic waste along the Latvian coastline. Inspired by a successful pilot at the MAD Liepāja youth festival in 2025, the municipality encouraged these private operators to adopt a deposit-based reusable cup system. The strategic goal was to address the environmental impact of takeaway beverage packaging in a high-traffic recreational area. By including a recommendation for reusable systems within the municipal contracts for the cafe premises, the city aimed to foster a voluntary transition toward circularity among local hospitality businesses.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation involved a system where customers could rent a hard plastic cup for a €2 fee, managed through a dedicated mobile application. Upon returning the cup to any of the five participating cafes, the fee was refunded to the customer's bank card, or they could exchange the cup for a token to use on their next visit. This expansion of the festival concept into daily business operations (Scaling out) provided critical insights into the practicalities of circular takeaway systems. However, the results were mixed, highlighting significant barriers to adoption. While the initiative aimed for less waste, the reliance on a mobile app proved to be a major friction point, particularly for foreign visitors and beachgoers who preferred a more seamless experience. Furthermore, because the system was a recommendation rather than a mandate, participation varied; one cafe eventually ignored the initiative entirely, while others struggled with the administrative burden on staff. These challenges have led to a realization that the current solution may not be sufficiently green if the return rate remains low, potentially leading to a risk of greenwashing. The experience underscores the need for more convenient solutions that do not require app downloads, ensuring that the transition toward a culture of reuse (Scaling deep) is supported by user-friendly technology and stronger policy frameworks (Scaling up).



How to use it for free?

Your Lend Cup for 72 hours

Download the **RevoToken** application on your phone, then sign up with your credit card

On the first use your balance will be **0 tokens**
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Case 54: Making reusable takeaway easy for campers at a Polish campsite

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Wdzydze Tucholskie, Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In hospitality and outdoor tourism, providing food outside regular restaurant opening hours often generates significant volumes of single-use packaging waste. At the Półwysep Lipa holiday resort in Kashubia, the management company Maknitt-Tur sought a sustainable way to offer ready-to-eat meals around the clock without resorting to disposable containers. Launched on 31 August 2026, the strategic vision was to establish an automated, closed-loop catering service that operates 24/7 with minimal staffing requirements. By preparing pasteurized meals in reusable glass jars directly in the resort kitchen, the facility aimed to eliminate single-use plastics, create an additional off-hours revenue stream, and keep all logistics strictly on-site. The initiative demonstrates how public and commercial catering facilities in rural or seasonal locations can take full ownership of circular packaging systems.



THE JOURNEY

The initiative geographically transferred an automated circular vending model from urban offices to a remote holiday facility (Scaling out). Local deployment required key operational adjustments: sheltering the unit in an exterior cabin against forest humidity and temperature swings, replacing mandatory app registrations with frictionless contactless card payments for short-stay guests, and handling meal cooking, jar washing, and refilling entirely in-house without third-party logistics.

Initial shoulder-season targets were calibrated to 20 to 40 meals per week, primarily driven by weekend cottage visitors purchasing the in-house Awaryjny Słoik jars. Although strong guest interest prompted management to consider the unit as a permanent feature for the 2027 season, the rollout encountered distinct obstacles. Launching on 31 August meant missing peak summer footfall, the isolated peninsula location complicated hardware delivery and maintenance, and dense forest surroundings caused GSM connectivity issues. Furthermore, verifying reliable temperature maintenance inside the outdoor cabin during colder conditions remains an ongoing technical test. Next steps focus on analysing September sales and deposit return rates, adjusting the menu toward autumn soups and warm meal bases, and validating the system under high-capacity conditions once peak tourism returns.

Case 55: Rethinking office lunches with reusable jars in Gdańsk

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Gdańsk, Poland	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

In January 2026, Wolters Kluwer Polska partnered with meal operator Challengeen to address the persistent issue of single-use takeaway packaging at their office in Gdańsk. The strategic objective was to provide employees with healthy, ready meals available throughout the working day without generating single-use waste. Under a host agreement requiring no capital investment from the employer, the operator provided a Venloop smart fridge stocked with meals in returnable glass jars alongside a collection rack for empties, while also managing replenishment, jar collection, and commercial washing. In return, the host provided dedicated floor space, electricity, and internal communication. The goal was to demonstrate how commercial offices can actively replace disposable packaging with an automated, circular deposit-return system.

THE JOURNEY

The pilot ran until the 2026 summer break, uncovering clear operational friction alongside valuable institutional learning. Uptake during the initial months was modest. A survey of 67 employees revealed that 52 respondents had never purchased from the fridge, only 15 had tried it, and just one person had become a regular user. The primary barrier identified was the purchasing process, as users were required to download an application and link a payment card in advance. Other reported obstacles included a menu that lacked variety, competition from food brought from home, pricing, and irregular office attendance due to hybrid work patterns.

To build an authentic reuse culture and shift employee habits (scaling deep), the partners used the survey data to pivot the operational model. For the October 2026 relaunch, the fridge is being equipped with a contactless card payment terminal to eliminate app registration, while the menu is expanding to include requested items such as fresh sandwiches, cold salads, and additional vegetarian options. This user-led adaptation revitalised interest, with 33 respondents stating they would use the service post-summer, 21 of them conditional on these specific improvements. Following performance validation in Gdańsk, the company will evaluate a broader geographical rollout to its Warsaw location (scaling out), illustrating how transparent feedback and iterative design are essential to making circular procurement work in practice.

Case 56: Bringing circular catering standards into daily social enterprise operations in Cieszyn

LOCATION	CATEGORY
Cieszyn, Poland	Takeaway

SCALING DIMENSIONS

 SCALING OUT

 SCALING UP

 SCALING DEEP

THE VISION

The Być Razem Foundation in Cieszyn recognized a critical gap in the social enterprise sector, where the focus on social missions often overshadows environmental responsibility. Many social enterprises in Poland have historically ignored ecological standards, viewing them as secondary to their primary goal of supporting vulnerable people. The strategic vision is to bridge this gap by proving that social and environmental values can coexist. By integrating circular economy principles into the management of their food services and catering, the foundation aims to set a new standard for the sector, ensuring that the mission of supporting people also includes protecting the planet through reduced waste and sustainable procurement.

THE JOURNEY

The implementation began with the adoption of practical tools, specifically a comprehensive guide on reusability and a green events checklist. These materials were first used to audit the foundation's own operations, leading to immediate changes at their social restaurant, Bistro na Wałowej. Concrete actions include the elimination of single-use portion sachets for condiments like ketchup, sugar, salt, and coffee cream, alongside an upcoming information campaign to encourage customers to bring their own containers. To ensure a broader impact, the foundation is integrating these circular practices into its Manager Academy, which will train 70 leaders from social enterprises across Poland starting in October 2026 (Scaling Out). This educational approach is designed to shift the cultural mindset within the sector, moving from a purely social focus to a holistic sustainability model (Scaling Deep). Furthermore, the foundation is working to include reusability requirements in future tenders for hotel and catering services. Despite these successes, the journey faces challenges, including internal resistance to change and a significant lack of time for staff to prioritize new green protocols. The experience in Cieszyn demonstrates that while social enterprises are ideal vehicles for community change, the transition to circularity requires persistent leadership and the translation of environmental goals into simple, actionable management tools.

Key lessons and future scaling in takeaway settings

The takeaway cases highlight three important lessons for introducing reusable packaging in cafés, restaurants, markets and other food-to-go environments.

First, convenience strongly influences participation. Customers need straightforward ways to obtain and return reusable packaging. Complicated deposits, digital requirements or limited return options can discourage use.

Second, business operations must remain practical and viable. Reusable systems affect staff routines, storage, washing, costs and customer service. Solutions must therefore fit the operational and financial conditions of participating businesses.

Third, availability does not guarantee adoption. Introducing reusable packaging is only the first step. Staff engagement, customer communication and repeated use are important for integrating reuse into everyday purchasing habits.

Looking ahead, cooperation between businesses, shared return infrastructure and coordinated local initiatives may help make reusable packaging more accessible and convenient. Scaling Out can extend solutions to new locations, while Scaling Deep depends on sustained customer and staff participation. Supportive municipal frameworks may also create opportunities for Scaling Up.

Overall, the cases demonstrate that successful takeaway replication requires systems that are convenient for customers, manageable for businesses and capable of supporting repeated use.

Conclusions on replication and scaling

The 56 replication cases documented through Change(K)now! demonstrate that expanding reusable food and beverage packaging requires more than transferring a successful pilot solution to a new setting. Reuse systems must work within local infrastructure, business operations and institutional arrangements, while remaining convenient for the people who use them.

The cases cover events, takeaway services, institutional catering and strategic initiatives across eight Baltic Sea Region countries. Their experiences provide practical insights into how reusable packaging can be introduced, adapted and supported in different contexts. The three scaling dimensions – Scaling Out, Scaling Up and Scaling Deep – help organise these findings and identify the conditions that can support wider and more sustained implementation.

Conclusions on Scaling Out

Introducing reusable packaging in new locations, businesses and institutions is often easier when existing infrastructure, partnerships and operational experience can be used.

Copenhagen Zoo built on Copenhagen's established reuse infrastructure, circulating more than 30,000 reusable cups in its first month. In Hamburg, SURI Signature expanded from two pilot locations to more than 11 weekly markets by integrating reuse into existing business operations. These cases illustrate

how established logistics, washing facilities and experienced partners can support wider implementation.

However, **successful replication requires local adaptation rather than direct copying**. Audentes Lunch in Tallinn adapted an earlier deposit-based model into a bring-or-buy approach, while the Gdańsk office lunch pilot encountered limited uptake because the service did not sufficiently match users' needs and purchasing routines.

Other cases demonstrate that practical assistance alone is not always enough. At Goldbekmarkt in Hamburg, consultations and support did not lead to a vendor adopting reusable packaging. This highlights the importance of business commitment, manageable operations and clear incentives.

The central lesson from Scaling Out is that reusable packaging solutions need a transferable starting point, but sufficient flexibility to fit local conditions. Replication is therefore a process of adaptation and learning, not simply geographical expansion.

Conclusions on Scaling Up

Municipalities, public authorities and larger organisations can help create the conditions for wider implementation of reusable packaging through coordination, procurement, shared infrastructure and institutional commitments.

Frederiksberg's extension of Copenhagen's reuse system illustrates how municipal cooperation and investment can support shared infrastructure across administrative boundaries. The Riga event case similarly demonstrates the practical value of coordinated arrangements across multiple vendors, although such coordination does not in itself constitute lasting institutional change.

Institutional support can also help establish common expectations, encourage participation and reduce barriers that individual businesses cannot address alone. However, **public commitment and infrastructure do not automatically ensure effective implementation**. Experiences from Liepāja's coastal cafés highlight administrative and digital challenges, while limited initial returns in Frederiksberg demonstrate the continuing importance of consumer participation.

The cases also underline the need for clear long-term responsibilities. Reusable packaging systems require ongoing financing and management of collection, washing, transport and administration. These arrangements must remain viable beyond initial project funding.

Although several initiatives demonstrate institutional coordination and commitment, the available evidence does not consistently show that reuse has become embedded in permanent policies, procurement requirements or organisational procedures.

The central lesson from Scaling Up is that institutional support is most valuable when it creates practical, financially viable and lasting conditions for reusable packaging. Policies, procurement and cooperation can enable wider adoption, but must be connected to workable operating systems.

Conclusions on Scaling Deep

Making reusable packaging available does not necessarily mean that customers will choose it, employees will promote it or businesses will integrate it into everyday operations.

Convenience and compatibility with existing routines are essential. In the Gdańsk office lunch pilot, only 15 of 67 surveyed employees had tried the service, and just one had become a regular user. Digital registration, payment requirements, menu variety and pricing contributed to limited adoption. Planned adjustments may improve accessibility, although their effects remain to be demonstrated.

Staff engagement and clear procedures are equally important. Cases such as SURI Signature and A+M Mittelmeer-Spezialitäten illustrate how communication, training and practical adaptations can help businesses introduce reusable packaging into daily operations.

At the same time, information and awareness do not necessarily lead to changed behaviour. At Goldbekmarkt, consultations and assistance did not result in adoption, while educational activities at the Anykščiai summer camps created opportunities for participation without necessarily demonstrating lasting changes beyond the event.

The experiences also show that digital solutions can support reuse but may become barriers when they complicate purchasing, payment or administrative procedures.

The central lesson from Scaling Deep is that reusable packaging must become a convenient and manageable part of everyday practices. Communication and initial participation are important, but repeated use, reliable returns and established routines are stronger indicators of sustained adoption.

Overall conclusions and implications for future replication

Across the 56 cases, three overarching findings stand out:

1. **Reusable packaging solutions must be adapted to local conditions.** Infrastructure, washing and return arrangements, financing, business operations and user needs determine whether a solution can function in a new setting.
2. **Implementation is only the beginning.** Making reusable packaging available does not guarantee that customers will use it, businesses will maintain it or institutions will support it over time. Practical convenience, operational viability and participation are essential.
3. **Replication requires cooperation and continuous learning.** Businesses, municipalities, institutions, staff and users all influence implementation. Both successful initiatives and those facing difficulties provide valuable lessons for improving reuse systems.

Based on these experiences, future initiatives should:

1. **Assess local readiness.** Examine infrastructure, business conditions, operational capacity, financing and user needs before introducing a reuse system.

2. **Design for everyday operation.** Establish practical arrangements and clear responsibilities for distribution, collection, washing, communication and system management.
3. **Adapt solutions to different settings.** Recognise that events, takeaway businesses, institutions and strategic initiatives have different operating conditions, opportunities and implementation timelines.
4. **Plan for long-term continuity.** Consider how reuse systems can remain operational and financially viable beyond pilot funding, individual events or temporary project commitments.
5. **Monitor actual use and adoption.** Measure participation, return rates, repeated use and operational viability alongside implementation status to understand whether reuse becomes established over time.

The three scaling dimensions help explain how these conditions interact. Scaling Out enables reusable packaging solutions to reach new settings, Scaling Up can establish more supportive institutional frameworks, and Scaling Deep addresses the everyday practices needed for continued use. Progress in one dimension does not automatically lead to progress in the others.

The overall conclusion is that reusable food and beverage packaging can only become a lasting alternative to single-use packaging when the systems surrounding it work in practice. Successful replication depends on combining adaptable solutions, viable operations, institutional support and sustained participation.

While the documented cases provide stronger evidence of implementation experiences, enabling conditions and barriers than of long-term environmental or behavioural impact, they offer a valuable practical foundation for expanding reusable packaging across the Baltic Sea Region.

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CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Change(K)now!

The Change(K)now! project is co-funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region.

The project's main objective is a mindset change from single-use to circular or multiple-use of food delivery systems in cities and residents of the Baltic Sea Region.

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